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STUDIES IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

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STUDIES IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

PARTLY BASED ON

THE GIFFORD LECTURES

DELIVERED IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

IN THE YEAR 1923

BY

A. SETH PRINGLE-PATTISON

LL.D., D.C.L.

FELLOW OF THE BRITISH ACADEMY

EMERITUS PROFESSOR OF LOGIC AND METAPHYSICS

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PREFACE

As indicated on the title-page, this volume is partly based on the Gifford Lectures delivered in the University of Edinburgh in 1923. The course of lectures given in that year was prepared under considerable pressure, and, as it did not constitute a homogeneous whole, it was unsuited for publication as it stood. Its composite character was acknowledged in the title under which it was advertised, 'Religious Origins and the Philosophy of History'. Beginning with a group of lectures which discussed, in the light of modern anthropology, the origin of religion and some of its most elementary forms, it passed immediately to another group, in which the process was traced by which the original conception of Yahweh, as the tribal God of Israel, was transformed by the Prophets into that of the God of the whole earth. The lofty monotheism of the Hebrew Prophets carried with it a philosophy of history—may almost be said to be in its essence such a philosophy—and this idea formed the connecting link between the first part of the course and the concluding lectures, which were devoted to a review of characteristic theories of history, from St. Augustine's *City of God* to the constructions of Kant and Hegel.

The Philosophy of Religion and the Philosophy of History are certainly intimately related, but to combine the two in this fashion was obviously to leave both fragmentary. I took an early opportunity, therefore, of bringing together, in one of the Annual Lectures of the British Academy, the substance of what I had to say on the Philosophy of History. This lecture was published in the Proceedings of the Academy for 1924. Since then, I have endeavoured at intervals to fill in and complete the sketch of a Philosophy of Religion which, in the

Gifford Lectures, was little more than begun. The result is the present volume. The chapters which were originally given as lectures, Chapters II, III, IV, and VIII, IX, XI, have been subjected to frequent revision, and eleven new chapters have been added. But, in spite of these large additions, it is obvious at a glance that completeness still remains a distant goal; for nothing is here said of Buddhism, of Hinduism in its many developments, or of any of the other faiths that divide the allegiance of mankind.

The consciousness of this incompleteness has dictated the choice of a title for the book. I have called it 'Studies' in the Philosophy of Religion, to indicate that it makes no claim to be a fully equipped text-book on the subject. But I should much regret if this title were taken to mean that the volume is no more than a collection of detached papers. I have dealt with only a single line of religious development—that, namely, which culminates in Christian theism—but, so far as that particular line of advance is concerned, the chapters will be found to follow one another in an orderly succession. It is, in fact, only because the volume is in that sense a unity that it is now given to the public.

I am indebted to Mr. W. D. Ross, Provost of Oriel College, for his kindness in reading the proofs, and I have again, as on a previous occasion, to thank my old friend, Mr. J. B. Capper, for many helpful suggestions.

EDINBURGH,
May 1930.

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INTRODUCTORY

THE MEANING AND SCOPE OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

A FEW words may be useful at the outset as an indication of what we commonly mean by the Philosophy of Religion. Philosophy was described long ago by Plato as the 'synoptic' view of things. That is to say, it is the attempt to see things together—to keep all the main features of the world in view, and to grasp them in their relation to one another as parts of one whole. Only thus can we acquire a sense of proportion and estimate aright the significance of any particular range of facts for our ultimate conclusions about the nature of the world-process and the world-ground. Accordingly the philosophy of any particular department of experience, the Philosophy of Religion, the Philosophy of Art, the Philosophy of Law, is to be taken as meaning an analysis and interpretation of the experience in question in its bearing upon our view of man and the world in which he lives. And when the facts upon which we concentrate are so universal, and in their nature so remarkable, as those disclosed by the history of religion, the philosophy of man's religious experience cannot but exercise a determining influence upon our general philosophical conclusions. In fact with many writers the particular discussion tends to merge in the more general.

The facts with which a philosophy of religion has to deal are supplied by the history of religion, in the most comprehensive sense of that term—as Tiele puts it, 'all religions of the civilized and uncivilized world, dead and living', religion in short as a 'historical and psychological phenomenon' in all its manifestations. These facts, it should be noted, constitute the *data* of the philosophy of religion: they do not themselves constitute a 'philosophy' or, in Tiele's use of the term, a 'science' of religion. 'If', he says, 'I have minutely described all the religions in existence, their doctrines, myths and customs, the observances they

inculcate and the organization of their adherents, tracing the different religions from their origin to their bloom and decay, I have merely collected the materials with which the science of religion works.' The historical record, however complete, is not enough: pure history is not philosophy. To achieve a philosophy of religion we should be able to discover in the varied manifestations a common principle to whose roots in human nature we can point, whose evolution we can trace by intelligible stages from lower to higher and more adequate forms, as well as its intimate relations with the other main factors in human civilization.

Obviously, in its very conception, the Philosophy of Religion has discarded the traditional division of religions into true and false, one alone being accepted as absolute truth and the others branded indiscriminately as false. While we recognize the great part played by the Jewish race in the religious education of mankind, we are no longer expected to believe that the Mosaic legislation was originally written by the Deity with his own fingers upon tables of stone in the desert of Sinai, or that, in the sequel, Palestine enjoyed a monopoly of Divine truth, while the whole of the rest of the world was plunged in outer darkness, their gods evil spirits and their worship a tissue of abominations. It already seems strange to us that such things should ever have been believed by any one capable of reflection or of human feeling.

> Children of men! The unseen Power, whose eye
> Forever doth accompany mankind,
> Hath looked on no religion scornfully
> That man did ever find.
>
> Which has not taught weak wills how much they can?
> Which has not fall'n on the dry heart like rain?
> Which has not cried to sunk, self-weary man:
> *Thou must be born again*![1]

[1] Matthew Arnold, *Progress*.

This is far from saying that all religions are equally good or equally true. The difference between them in these respects, if we turn from the lowest to the highest, is almost infinite; and a Christian, for example, need not abate his claim for the supreme position of Christianity because he treats with respect the other great religions of mankind or because he acknowledges the glimpses of truth, the rudimentary endeavours after a better life, which may accompany the practice of an otherwise barbaric creed and ritual, and which gave that creed its vitality while it lived. For we may be sure it is only by the measure, however small, of truth or real helpfulness which it contains that any belief or institution survives; and it will yield its place only to one which contains more of both. It is encouraging to observe how largely Christian missionaries, and those who train and advise them, have already adopted this attitude towards the native religions of the races to which they are sent. As one of them recently expressed himself in an address to students:—'We have realized that the missionary must make a sympathetic study of the religions of the people among whom he labours. The mere iconoclast will not reach their hearts and convince their minds. We must realize what their religions mean to them, find points of contact, and lead them on to the religion in which their deepest needs will be perfectly satisfied'. Such an utterance is as satisfactory from an intellectual point of view as it is full of promise for the future progress of missionary effort. And, it may be added, those who take this wise advice are themselves likely, in the process, to recognize more clearly what is essential and what is non-essential in the Christian faith.

If the Philosophy of Religion thus abrogates the traditional distinction between one true and perfect religion —true and perfect because supernaturally revealed— and innumerable false and corrupt creeds, the offspring of

purely human passions and desires, it rejects as uncompromisingly the sheer contrast, so familiar in eighteenth-century rationalism, between the historical religions of the world regarded as superstitious accretions and Natural Religion so-called, a short and simple creed, susceptible of logical proof, whose tenets included all that was essential to true religion. Whether treated as a primitive revelation, or attributed to a natural instinct, or regarded simply as reached by the ordinary operations of reason upon the facts before it, the doctrines in question were usually restricted to two articles, the existence of God and the immortality of the soul—sometimes, as in Hume, to the former alone. But we confound religion with philosophy if we make religion consist in intellectual assent to certain conclusions of the reflective reason. Undoubtedly religion must always include an intellectual element. There must be some conception, however vague to begin with, of the object of worship. But the distinctive features of religion are the element of feeling or emotion in which it is born, and the resultant direction given to the will, the attitude assumed towards the heavenly powers. It is the proper office of philosophy, or let us say of the critical reason generally, to purify religious belief and practice by teaching man to discard intellectually untenable or morally unworthy conceptions of the divine. But philosophy cannot create the religious atmosphere. As a matter of history that atmosphere has been realized only in the collective life of some religious community. The positive religions of mankind are the media in which the religious sentiment has found spontaneous expression and in which it has been nursed and propagated. Natural religion is therefore, in a sense, a contradiction in terms; it is at any rate something which has never existed as a religion.

The eighteenth century is specially known as the age of Enlightenment, and its characteristic occupation was

a crusade against the superstitions and abuses of the past. No doubt there was much work needing to be done in that direction, and good work was done. But in the religious as in other spheres, the eighteenth-century theory of human nature and progress was vitiated by the profoundly unhistorical spirit of the age. The view taken of the past was purely negative, a dark night of superstition and oppression, while the writers conceived themselves as standing in the clear light of day. D'Alembert was of opinion that it would be well if history, with its record of 'fraud and error', could be simply obliterated from memory like a vast nightmare. In this spirit all the religions of the past, including Christianity, were to the men of the Enlightenment simply superstitions to be swept away. Against Christianity in fact, as nearest to them, their chief assault was directed. To Voltaire historical religion was nothing but a huge organization of conscious fraud, under whose cover unscrupulous rogues enslaved and exploited the ignorant masses. As he puts it, speaking of a doctrine prominent in many religions of an earlier type: 'it was the invention of the first knave who met a fool'. Certainly, when we investigate primitive rites and customs, it is often difficult to understand the mentality which could originate ideas and practices so strange; but it is almost as difficult for us to-day to enter into the frame of mind which could contemplate this eighteenth-century theory as a serious explanation of the religious beliefs and institutions of the past. Crude and even ridiculous as man's earliest religious ideas may appear, they represent at least the first stirrings of emotions perhaps the most characteristic of man as man—emotions which, with advancing knowledge and a deeper moral experience, find for themselves gradually a more adequate object and a more reasonable expression. No sentiment is more spontaneous in its origin than the religious sentiment, more persistent throughout human history, and more far-reaching in its influence. How is it

possible, then, to treat it in all its varied modes of expression as an unaccountable aberration of the human mind, or as imposed upon the unthinking multitude by a band of unscrupulous conspirators for their own selfish ends? The Philosophy of Religion is, in its essence, a revolt against this incredible reading of the human past.

The Philosophy of Religion is, in this sense, one aspect of the Philosophy of History; and in point of fact the two were born together, in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, in the closely related work of Lessing and Herder. Lessing's short tract *The Education of the Human Race*, published in 1780, a year before his death, marks the beginning of the Philosophy of Religion, as we understand the term to-day. It is a mere sketch, restricting itself almost entirely to the relation of Judaism and Christianity. But its central idea—the idea of a continuous revelation to the race, proceeding by stages, and comparable to the process of education in the case of the individual man—is easily susceptible of a much wider application; and the suggestion proved extraordinarily fruitful in the hands of the great German Idealists at the opening of the nineteenth century. The idea is so important because it raises us above the abstract opposition between reason and revelation and the equally untenable contrast between a religion of pure reason and the mere superstition of the popular creeds. By giving a wider scope to reason and a more inward meaning to revelation, it enables us to see in the historic faiths of mankind the vehicles of the moral and spiritual education of the race, and to trace in the record, on the whole, an advance in man's conceptions of God and His relation to the world.

That there is such an advance *on the whole* may almost be said to be a postulate of the Philosophy of Religion, though, like every philosophical postulate, it is one which must ultimately rest for its justification on the evidence of the facts themselves. We cannot assume, and we need

not expect to prove, a continuous linear progress from the lowest to the highest, or to trace, as some philosophers have thought, a necessary dialectical movement in the historical sequence of religious beliefs. The record may show instances of degeneration and decay, periods of stagnation, blind alleys which seem to lead nowhere. But when we speak of the 'philosophy' of any subject we imply, as was indicated at the outset, that we can to some extent interpret or rationalize it—give a meaning and a place to it in our general scheme of things. If, then, we accept religion as a normal and universal expression of human nature, we naturally assume, and may reasonably hope in the sequel to prove, that there is some kind of order, some kind of growth, traceable in its multitudinous manifestations. It would be otherwise, indeed, were we prepared to subscribe in advance to Hume's conclusion at the end of his *Natural History of Religion*: 'Examine', he says, 'the religious principles which have in fact prevailed in the world. You will scarcely be persuaded that they are anything but sick men's dreams, or perhaps will regard them more as the playsome whimsies of monkeys in human shape, than the serious, positive, dogmatical asseverations of a being who dignifies himself with the name of rational.' In that case it would certainly be incongruous to speak of a 'Philosophy' of Religion: we should be content with Hume's own title; for even diseases, errors and illusions have their 'natural history.' The contrast which Hume emphasizes throughout between the 'genuine principles of theism' and 'religious fictions and chimeras'—his method of opposing 'one species of superstition to another' and leaving them to fight out their differences, while he makes his own final 'escape into the calm though obscure regions of philosophy'—sufficiently show that he was dominated in his investigation by the prejudices of the Enlightenment, and accepted the current antithesis between natural religion and superstition. And it is significant that in his

hands the creed of Natural Religion shrinks to the acknowledgement of 'some intelligent cause or author' of the visible universe, or, as he expresses it in his *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*, the conclusion 'that the cause or causes of order in the universe probably bear some remote analogy to human intelligence'. And he admits that this 'one simple though somewhat ambiguous proposition affords no inference that affects human life or can be the source of any action or forbearance'—which is in so many words to deny that it is a religious proposition at all.

In speaking of 'progress' or advance from 'lower' to 'higher' religions, a standard of valuation is necessarily assumed; and some may contend that this is an arbitrary and question-begging procedure—little better indeed than a revival of the old classification into true and false—seeing that the adherent of each positive creed will naturally regard his own as the highest and best, and interpret the whole development accordingly as a process towards that goal. The result is therefore inevitably a Christian, a Mohammedan, or a Buddhist Philosophy of religion, as the case may be, each differing from the others and none of them beyond the suspicion of subjective bias. An objective or scientifically impartial interpretation of the facts, according to these critics, is still to seek. But such scepticism, it may be answered, overshoots its mark. Even if subjective bias be unavoidable in determining the final term of the series, there is ample scope for agreement as regards the earlier stages and the broad lines on which development has proceeded. Men of different civilizations may differ as to which of the great religions of the world is absolutely the highest and best; but there can be no doubt about the gulf which separates all the possible claimants for that position from the animistic beliefs of savages or the primitive worship of the tribal god. Progress in religion is one aspect of

man's general advance in civilization. As men are, so are their gods. Every advance in social morality and humane manners, every increase in man's knowledge of the world and its laws, is reflected in the character of the gods he worships. We can trace therefore the general line of advance and point to specific stages in the process—the passage, for example, from the nature-religions, in which the gods are the personifications of natural forces, to the ethical religions, in which the gods are invested with moral attributes and personify the moral order of the world. The transition from the one to the other may be gradual, as we see for example in the Greek mythology, but the difference between the two types of religion is clear, and it is equally clear which type is religiously the higher. So again with the passage from polytheism to monotheism, or that from a tribal or national to a universal religion.

Moreover it is not the case that the philosophy of religion has simply the task of arranging the historical forms of religion in order of merit, and that, having done so, it is content to accept *en bloc* from dogmatic theology the officially formulated creed of the religion to which it has assigned the highest place. The philosopher must have learned from his historical survey how much survives in any higher religion of the earlier beliefs and practices which it is supposed to have displaced, how often, too, the faith of the founder of a religion may be disfigured beyond recognition in the versions of his followers. How has popular Buddhism, for example, with its ubiquitous images of the Buddha, and the luxuriant mythology with which it has surrounded his birth, transformed the severely ethical teaching of Gautama! How many elements are fused in the traditional creeds of Christendom! It is the office of the philosophy of religion, applying the insight gained in its historical and comparative review, to single out the characteristic and essential contribution of each religion in turn to the religious progress of mankind.

And inasmuch as religion speaks the language of feeling, with a free use of poetic imagery, its doctrines may require restatement to bring them into harmony with the rest of our experience, more particularly with the conclusions of science and of general philosophy. It is the final office of the philosophy of religion to effect such restatement as is necessary in the interest of our world-view as a whole.

CHAPTER II

THE BEGINNINGS: RELIGION AND MAGIC

ANY attempt to trace the development of religion must presuppose some general understanding of what religion is. It might seem natural therefore to begin with a precise definition of the phenomena we are about to investigate. What in short do we take to be the essential feature, characteristic of religious beliefs and practices as such, and distinguishing them from other attitudes and activities of the human spirit? To supply such a definition, however, is not so simple as it seems. Edward Caird, in his Gifford Lectures on *The Evolution of Religion*, argues with much force that it must be almost profitless to seek for a common formula which will fit all forms of religious expression, from the superstitions of savages to the loftiest and most spiritual faiths of mankind; for we are necessarily driven, in that case, to define in terms of the lowest or most rudimentary forms, and the beggarly elements reached along such a path would be entirely useless in the interpretation of the higher levels of religious experience. In point of fact such a method of procedure runs counter to the very idea of development. In any instance of development it is the higher stages which help us to understand the lower. Phenomena which would otherwise be simply grotesque or unmeaning become intelligible in the light of that which they dimly prefigure. Apart from the sequel we should never have dreamt of attaching a religious significance to them at all. What we seek then, Caird urges, is a principle operative in the whole development, 'a principle which will reveal itself, not so much in each religion taken separately, as in all the religions contemplated as stages in a process; and, most of all, in the transitions of thought, whereby one religion develops out of another, or asserts itself in conflict against it'.[1] Hence any satisfactory defini-

[1] *Evolution of Religion*, i, p. 43.

tion of religion 'must be derived from a consideration of the whole course of its history viewed as a process of transition from the lowest to the highest. . . . What we have in that history is just religion progressively *defining itself*, and the idea of religion will be most clearly expressed in the most mature form which it has reached as the result of the whole process'.[1] Whatever difference of opinion may exist therefore as to the beginning and the end in such a process—as to the nature of the lowest stage, and as to what we are justified in regarding as the highest or culminating stage—the general direction of the advance is unmistakable. At each successive stage the *terminus a quo* and the *terminus ad quem* are plain, and the study of what is progressively discarded, and what is retained and carried forward to be still further purified, constitutes our surest guide to the essence of true religion. This is a criterion which we can apply from the outset, and the attempt to proceed otherwise involves us, as we shall immediately see, in profitless discussion. The conflicting theories of anthropologists as to the origin of religion are mainly due to the hard and fast 'minimum definition' which they began by laying down.

It is matter of common knowledge that our conceptions of primitive man—his mentality and his history—have been revolutionized within the last fifty or sixty years. It would in fact be more correct to say that, within that period, anthropology has for the first time brought us into authentic contact with the workings of the savage mind, and thereby laid the foundations of a true science of human origins. Just as the spade of the archaeologist, in Crete, at Tiryns, at Mycenae, has brought to light the monuments of an 'Aegean' or 'Minoan' civilization, a prehellenic civilization in the Mediterranean area, and compelled us accordingly to rewrite the beginnings of Greek history, so

[1] *Ibid.*, i, p. 61.

the trained instinct of the anthropologist, interpreting in the light of a wider experience incongruous and hitherto unintelligible details in the traditional stories of gods and heroes, has disinterred the dim underworld of primitive superstition and savage ritual which was the historical antecedent and background of the gleaming Olympian hierarchy. Just as, on a larger scale, industrious diggings in the glacial drift have revealed stratum beneath stratum of prehistoric life, and shown us the skulls of our human or semi-human ancestors of palaeolithic times, their dwellings, and their way of living, so a great and sustained effort of sympathetic imagination, based on an immense induction of facts gathered all over the world, has succeeded in reconstructing for us with a high degree of probability the mental world of primitive man, his beliefs about himself and his environment, and the complex mass of ritual observances in which his life was so strangely swathed. I am far from suggesting that anything like finality has been reached by this young and vigorous science. There is not yet that consensus in detail which is the mark of definitely established knowledge. One sees rather a luxuriant growth of far-reaching hypotheses which are often in a greater or less degree in conflict with one another. Sir Alfred Lyall has caustically remarked that 'one effect of the immense accumulation of material has been to encourage speculative generalization, because it has provided a repertory out of which one may make arbitrary selection of examples and precedents to suit any theory'. But, after all, the devising and testing of hypotheses is the recognized method of the advance of scientific knowledge everywhere. Fertility in hypothesis is almost the characteristic merit of a young and growing science, so long as it is safeguarded by the frankest mutual criticism; and in this case certainly, if some of the theories ventilated have been far-fetched and extravagant, such criticism has been immediately in evidence. Moreover in these controversial

encounters one cannot fail to note the amount of ground common to the disputants, their agreement in method and in certain general presuppositions. It is the same here as in other departments of knowledge. We can no more expect to overturn the broad results of anthropological research than to go back to the pre-Copernican astronomy, or in Biblical criticism, for example, to return to theories of inerrancy and verbal inspiration.

We may perhaps take Tylor and Sir James Frazer as the most eminent representatives of the new science in two successive generations.[1] To Tylor we owe the term Animism, in which he sums up savage philosophy and religion. According to him, the foundation of primitive thought on these subjects is the idea of the soul, spirit, or ghost. Belief in the continued existence of the souls of the dead leads to ancestor-worship and, by analogy, to the idea of gods and demons and nature-spirits, and eventually to a belief in the high gods who rule the world or control certain of the great phenomena of nature. All these are conceived more or less in personal form. In Tylor's own words, the beings to whom barbaric worship is paid are 'actual human souls, or transformed human souls or beings modelled on human souls'.[2] And in this way Tylor seeks to explain or rationalize the attitude of the savage to his fetish. 'The modern Englishman wonders that a human being, however ignorant, should prostrate himself before

[1] The first generation would be represented by Tylor and Sir John Lubbock, and in Germany by Waitz. Tylor began publishing in 1859 and his chief work, *Primitive Culture*, appeared in 1871. In the second generation we have Andrew Lang's *Myth, Ritual and Religion*, published in 1887 and followed by many other volumes, the first edition of Frazer's *Golden Bough* in 1890, and Robertson Smith's *Religion of the Semites* in 1894. We can hardly perhaps speak yet of a third generation, but Dr. Marett's papers and essays, beginning in 1899 and becoming widely influential within the last fifteen or twenty years, seem to mark a further stage in the discussion.

[2] *Anthropology*, p. 364. Cf. p. 368: 'a belief in souls and other spirits (ghostly or divine beings) as the cause of his own life and of the events of the surrounding world'.

a stake stuck in the ground or a stone picked up by the wayside, and even talk to it and offer it food; but when the African or Hindu explains that he believes this stick or stone to be a receptacle in which a divine spirit has for a time embodied itself, this shows that there is a rational meaning in the act.' [1] Sir James Frazer accepts this definition of Tylor's apparently without qualification. 'By religion', he says, 'I understand a propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man, which are believed to direct and control the course of nature and of human life.' 'All conciliation', he proceeds, 'implies that the being conciliated is a conscious or personal agent, that his conduct is in some measure uncertain, and that he can be prevailed upon to vary it in the desired direction by a judicious appeal to his interests, his appetites, or his emotions.' [2] And this forms the basis of his elaborate distinction between religion and magic, which we shall presently have to examine. Religion is thus for him, as for Tylor, essentially bound up with the animistic philosophy, that is, with the belief in souls or spirits, agencies of a personal kind, as the explanatory causes of natural events. But however true it may be that religion tends to envisage its objects in this personal guise, and that personalism, moreover, is profoundly characteristic of religion in its highest reaches, it by no means follows that religion cannot exist in the absence of such personification, or that this is the only channel through which religious emotion may be aroused. Hence a number of the younger anthropologists have recently challenged Tylor's animistic philosophy as the last word on the savage mind —moved to do so in no small degree, I venture to think, by the nature of the consequences in which Sir James Frazer's definition involved him. These consequences are focused

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 366–7.

[2] *Golden Bough* (abridged edition), pp. 50–1. In another recent work, *Belief in Immortality*, i, pp. 9–10, he has stated this position even more explicitly.

in the celebrated antithesis between religion and magic already referred to, which we must now examine.

In the first edition of *The Golden Bough* he had been content, he tells us, 'to class magic loosely under religion as one of its lower forms'; but when the meaning of religion was restricted in the manner specified, a definition of magic had to be framed on lines which would clearly differentiate between the two. A hard and fast line is accordingly drawn by Sir James Frazer in the later editions between rites and ceremonies which are religious in character and those which, it is contended, must be regarded as magical or non-religious. The object of the ceremonies is in both cases, he indicates, the same—'to turn the order of natural phenomena to [man's] own advantage'. It is the human attitude and method of procedure that are different. The magician seeks to compass his end directly by the recitation of an appropriate incantation or spell. As Frazer somewhat rhetorically puts it, 'he supplicates no higher power, he sues the favour of no fickle and wayward being; he abases himself before no awful deity'. The ceremonies and forms of words 'bring about the desired result without the help of god or devil'. This, Frazer holds, was the primitive attitude of mind. Men 'attempted to force the great powers of nature to do their pleasure before they thought of courting their favour by offerings and prayer'. The magician claims to be 'directing the course of nature by his own unaided resources', and hence Frazer speaks of his 'haughty self-sufficiency', 'his arrogant demeanour towards the higher powers', as contrasted with the later religious sense of human 'helplessness' and 'the confession of man's entire dependence on the divine'—the attitude, in short, of prayer and supplication. In this sense, Frazer says, magic is older than religion in the history of humanity. 'An age of Religion', he ventures to surmise, 'has everywhere been preceded by an Age of Magic.'

It is in this connexion that Frazer elaborates his well-known thesis of the affinity of magic to science and their common opposition to religion. 'In so far', he says, 'as religion assumes the world to be directed by conscious agents who may be turned from their purpose by persuasion, it stands in fundamental opposition to magic as well as to science, both of which take for granted that the course of nature is determined, not by the passions or caprice of personal beings but by the operation of immutable laws operating mechanically.' The magician, that is to say, believes in the connexion of cause and effect; if he can hit on the right spell, he counts with confidence on its doing its work. In the practices of sympathetic magic Frazer finds, accordingly, 'a germ of the modern notion of natural law, or the view of nature as a series of events occurring in an invariable order without the intervention of personal agency'. 'This is in fact [he says] the modern conception of physical causation.' Only, unfortunately, the practitioners of magic were completely wrong as to the actual causal sequences in which they believed. You cannot really raise a wind by whistling, or bring down rain by dipping a branch in water; you cannot really kill a man by stabbing his waxen image, or heal a wound by anointing the weapon which inflicted it. And so, according to Frazer's theory, the magicians were in time found out. A gradual discovery of the inefficiency of magical ceremonies and incantations brought about, 'in the deeper minds', 'the great transition from magic to religion'. 'The discovery amounted to this, that men for the first time recognized their inability to manipulate at pleasure certain natural forces which hitherto they had believed to be completely within their control. It was a confession of human ignorance and weakness.' And so arose the idea of gods or spirits, 'other beings like himself but far stronger', 'unseen themselves', in whom resided the powers of which he now confessed himself to be

destitute, and whom he accordingly proceeded to approach in an attitude of supplication, hoping to gain by persuasion what he could no longer hope to extort by force.

But this ingenious reconstruction of primitive history is surely fatally defective in its psychology. Every mental fact reveals on analysis three aspects or elements, loosely distinguished as thought, feeling, and will—an element, let us say, of intellectual belief, an element of emotion, and an impulse towards action in some particular direction. Sir James Frazer, it may be noted, signalizes two of these elements as essential constituents of religion in his sense of the term, a 'theoretical' and a 'practical' element as he calls them, 'a belief in powers higher than man and an attempt to propitiate or please them'. 'Of the two', he adds, 'belief clearly comes first, since we must believe in the existence of a divine being before we can attempt to please him.' But, strangely enough, there is no reference to the element of emotion, which there is good reason to believe is, in the case of religion, the primary religious fact, out of which definite religious concepts or beliefs are, so to speak, precipitated in the course of advancing reflection. In the same spirit we find him describing the whole process of the primitive mind in terms of the calculating reason. In the age of magic, religious emotion is absent *ex hypothesi*, in the absence of conceptions round which it could gather; and when we come to the unconvincing transition from the age of magic to the age of religion, the transition is represented simply as the exchange of one set of conceptions for another. Disillusioned by repeated disappointments, man sits down, as it were, to reason the matter out. He becomes convinced that he has been on a wrong track, wrong not in the ends he had sought to compass, but in the means adopted to attain them. Hence, without any change of heart as to the values of life, he changes his theory of causation and devises a more promising method

of controlling the course of events in his own interests. Having essayed in vain to bend nature to his wishes by the sheer force of spells and enchantments, he now strives, as Frazer puts it, 'to coax and mollify a coy, capricious, or irascible deity by the soft insinuation of prayer and sacrifice'.

But if that is all that is to be said, 'the great transition' is no transition at all. Such a change of tactics, dictated by an enlightened self-interest, cannot yield us the fundamental differentiation between magic and religion, or beget a specifically religious emotion; the gods themselves are still nothing more than instruments to be set in motion by man's unrepentant egoism. But in truth an age of pure magic, as described in the *Golden Bough*, without a glimmer of religious feeling, is as much a myth as the pre-social condition of pure selfishness and anarchy—the *bellum omnium contra omnes*—from which, according to Hobbes and many other theorists, mankind was supposed to be delivered by a 'social contract'. In either case, had the myth been a reality, it could have had no such sequel as the theory gives it. 'Given a world of knaves, to evolve an honesty from their united action': so Carlyle sarcastically described the attempt of certain ethical theorists. You cannot develop social order and cohesion out of pure selfishness and anarchy. Neither philosophy nor history knows any 'transitions' of the kind suggested. All that history can show, or philosophy can justify, is the gradual unfolding of mental capacities and modes of action which we can trace back indefinitely to more rudimentary forms. It must be wrong, therefore, to start our discussion of religion with a definition which compels us to deny its presence in ceremonies and practices of a more primitive type, simply because they do not conform to the definition laid down.

Among recent anthropologists, Dr. Marett in particular has urged that we must not thus arbitrarily close the

record. In an essay on 'Pre-animistic Religion' published in 1899 he advanced strong grounds for believing that 'primitive or rudimentary religion, as we actually find it among savage peoples, is at once a wider and in certain respects a vaguer thing than "the belief in spiritual beings" of Tylor's famous "minimum definition" ', and that 'much of what has hitherto been classed as magic . . . is really religion of an elementary kind'. This argument he has elaborated in a number of papers published within the last twenty years. Others have arrived independently at a similar point of view.

We may best begin by dismissing from our minds the seductive but misleading analogy which Sir James Frazer elaborates between magic and science, and in respect of which he contrasts them both with religion. The 'fundamental conception' of magic, he says, 'is identical with that of modern science', seeing that 'underlying the whole system is a faith, implicit, but real and firm, in the order and uniformity of nature'. Religion, on the contrary, 'assumes that the course of nature is to some extent elastic or variable' in so far as it believes that the powers who control it can be 'turned from their course by persuasion and entreaty'. Now there is a sense in which the rudest savage takes for granted the uniformity of nature, namely in the mechanical operations and familiar sequences of his everyday life. We mystify ourselves gratuitously if we suppose the savage to attribute all the everyday happenings of his life to the immediate agency of spirits or supernatural forces, and to regard them on that account as essentially unforeseeable. The distinction between nature and the supernatural is, in a sense, as real for the savage as for the modern civilized man, and in practice as clearly drawn.

'Magic', says Dr. Malinowski in his admirable account of the Melanesian islanders, 'is undoubtedly regarded by the natives as absolutely indispensable to the welfare of the gardens. . . . Does this

mean, however, that the natives attribute all the good results to magic? Certainly not. If you were to suggest to a native that he should make his garden mainly by magic and scamp his work, he would simply smile on your simplicity. He knows as well as you do that there are natural conditions and causes, and by his observations he knows also that he is able to control these natural forces by mental and physical effort. . . . If the fences are broken down, if the seed is destroyed or has been dried or washed away, he will have recourse not to magic, but to work, guided by knowledge and reason. His experience has taught him also, on the other hand, that in spite of all his forethought and beyond all his efforts there are agencies and forces which one year bestow unwonted and unearned benefits of fertility, making everything run smooth and well; . . . and another year again the same agencies bring ill-luck and bad chance. . . . To control these influences and these only he employs magic. Thus there is a clear-cut division . . . and this line of division can also be traced in the social setting of work and ritual respectively. Though the garden magician is, as a rule, also the leader in practical activities, these two functions are kept strictly apart. Every magical ceremony has its distinctive name, its appropriate time and place in the scheme of work, and it stands out of the ordinary course of activities completely. . . . The two roles [of the leader and magician] never overlap or interfere: . . . any native will inform you without hesitation whether the man acts as magician or as leader in garden work.' [1]

The same clear differentiation is observable in the building of a canoe and in all the ordinary business of life. Systematic knowledge is methodically applied in the construction of the canoe, but magical ceremonies are performed over it, both during the construction and at the beginning and during the course of expeditions to insure it against the incalculable forces of wind and tide or hidden reef. Primitive man recognizes, in short, two domains of reality, the 'profane' and the 'sacred'. The first is the 'normal' world of his practical activities, in which he depends on observation and reason. This is the world

[1] In an essay on 'Magic, Science and Religion' in the volume, *Science, Religion and Reality*, pp. 30–1.

in which science is born and in which the idea of natural law has a meaning. The growth of science means the extension of the limits of this world, the reduction of more and more of human experience to the same level of normal and calculable processes. Magic, on the contrary, is concerned from first to last with the supernatural, the supernormal, the occult or mysterious. The forces which it invokes, or against which it professes to defend its votaries, operate in a completely inexplicable fashion, to which the ordinary course of events offers no parallel. And however important it may become in the sequel to differentiate between magic and religion, in view of the attitude towards the unseen powers which the terms respectively designate, they stand together at the outset as both dealing with the domain of the sacred, and both alike, therefore, contrasted with science and its methods.

If we rid ourselves accordingly of the illusory association of magic with science, we shall hardly be inclined to imagine religion as supervening upon a hitherto religionless world in the fashion depicted by Sir James Frazer. We shall expect rather to discover the potentiality of religion in emotions natural to man and operative in his experience from the beginning; and it may well be that a further scrutiny of primitive rites and ceremonies will reveal feelings of a genuinely religious character associated with practices which, from a modern religious point of view, seem purely magical. 'The priest, the sorcerer and the medicine man', remarks Dr. Hartland, 'are not yet differentiated from one another in savage society'—so little differentiated that anthropologists have begun to use the word 'shaman', borrowed from some of the Siberian tribes, to cover all three meanings.[1] Everything points, in short, to the probable truth of Dr. Marett's thesis that 'magic and religion are differentiated out from

[1] Presidential address to the Anthropological Section of the British Association, 1906.

a common plasm of crude beliefs about the awful and occult'.[1] It is a mistake in procedure, we must at least agree, to seek to determine the presence or absence of the religious attitude by the presence or absence of a certain concept. Clear concepts on such a subject are really not obtainable at a rudimentary level, as is sufficiently shown by the contradictory answers given by savages when interrogated as to their beliefs by travellers or missionaries. Stress should be laid on the element of feeling, the emotional attitude in presence of certain objects; for in any case the vague concept, which we may think we detect, crystallizes itself for the savage mind out of the original emotional experience, and is, to begin with, scarcely defined by the savage to himself. Hence his difficulty in defining it to others who ply him with questions, framed in terms of their own inherited and ready-made concepts and distinctions. As Dr. Marett well puts it, we have to realize that 'savage religion is something not so much thought out as danced out, that, in other words, it develops under conditions, psychological and sociological, which favour emotional or motor processes, whereas ideation remains relatively in abeyance'.[2]

The vague primitive emotion in which we may recognize 'the raw-material of religion' may be most nearly described, Dr. Marett thinks, by the word 'awe'. It is the term which best expresses man's instinctive attitude to the mysterious, the supernatural or supernormal, as we have called it, or the uncanny. *Primus in orbe deos fecit timor*, said the Latin poet,[3] and fear is undoubtedly a constituent of the feeling—a constituent only too apt to be dominant in the mind of an ignorant savage. But awe is not to be identified with fear, pure and simple; otherwise it had never been the fountain-head of religion. Abject terror and the degrading rites of what is not un-

[1] *Threshold of Religion*, Preface, p. xi. [2] *Ibid.*, p. xxxi.
[3] Statius, *Thebaid*, iii. 661, but anticipated by Petronius.

justly characterized as 'devil-worship' represent one direction in which the primitive emotion may be developed, or distorted, under the promptings of an uneasy conscience, rather than the original stuff, so to speak, of the emotion itself. The elemental emotion for which the name 'awe' is proposed contains also, in germ, the elevating sense of greatness or sublimity and the possibilities of benignant relations with a power which there is no *a priori* reason to conceive as inherently malignant. At the very outset there is a parting of the ways. If the one direction of development leads to a degrading superstition, the other may lead upwards to the mood of true worship, to religious submission, even to love.

The object of the undifferentiated emotion may be most safely described by a simple term like Power, if we understand by it power of a supernormal and mysterious kind, a force which, though it may reside in any natural object, manifests itself unaccountably in a fashion quite outside the range of ordinary natural happenings. The vague sense of something great, mysterious, and pervasive, on which man can lay hold, and in alliance with which he can face his world with confidence and courage, seems to be the meaning of several primitive terms which figure largely in recent anthropological discussions. The best known of these is the term *mana*, in common use among the islanders of the Pacific—'that fine primitive word', as Professor Gilbert Murray calls it, 'which comprises force, vitality, prestige, holiness and power of magic, and which may belong equally to a lion, a chief, a medicine-man or a battle-axe'.[1] Terms conveying a similar meaning are the *wakanda* and *orenda* of certain American Indian tribes, the *oŭdah* of the African Pygmies, and others. Codrington defines *mana* in its Melanesian use as

'a force altogether distinct from physical power, which acts in all kinds of ways for good and evil, and which it is of the greatest

[1] *Four Stages of Greek Religion*, p. 33.

advantage to possess or control . . . [Although] not physical, and in a way supernatural, it shows itself in physical force or in any kind of power or excellence which a man possesses. [Thus] if a man has been successful in fighting, it has not been his natural strength of arm, quickness of eye, or readiness of resource that has won success; he has certainly got the *mana* of a spirit or of some deceased warrior to empower him, conveyed in an amulet of a stone round his neck or a tuft of leaves in his belt, in a tooth hung upon a finger of his bow hand, or in the form of words with which he brings supernatural assistance to his side. [Similarly] if a man's pigs multiply and his gardens are productive, it is not because he is industrious and looks after his property, but because of the *mana* for pigs and yams that he possesses. Of course a yam naturally grows when planted; that is well known, but it will not be very large unless *mana* comes into play; a canoe will not be swift, unless *mana* be brought to bear upon it, a net will not catch many fish, nor an arrow inflict a mortal wound.'[1]

Here we are obviously at a level of thought far below the personalism of Tylor's definition. Ghosts and spirits may certainly possess *mana*, but every ghost does not necessarily possess it, and many animals and inanimate things do possess it. According to the Melanesian philosophy, every man's soul at his death becomes a ghost, but only a great man's soul becomes a ghost with *mana*, 'a ghost of worship,' as Codrington renders it. On the other hand a Melanesian 'comes by chance upon a stone which takes his fancy,—its shape is singular, it is like something, it is certainly not a common stone, there must be *mana* in it. So he argues with himself, and he lays it at the root of a tree to the fruit of which it has a certain resemblance, or he buries it in the ground when he plants his garden'. We must not imagine in such cases that he conceives the stone as inhabited by a spirit, or quasi-personal being; it is just that the stone as such possesses this mysterious efficacy. *Mana* in the native idiom is indifferently a noun or an adjective; it is the vaguely impersonal idea of power,

[1] *The Melanesians*, p. 119 n. (quoted by Marett, *Threshold*, pp. 104–5).

force, virtue, efficacy—of an altogether mysterious or, as we say, supernatural kind. Dr. Marett proposes accordingly that, without entangling ourselves unnecessarily in the niceties of savage usage, we should appropriate this term as a general category to designate the 'rudimentary or protoplasmic' type of religious experience—that which is the raw material for good religion and bad religion as well as for magic, white or black. And if *mana* may be said to express this primitive experience on its positive side, *tabu*, he says, 'a term drawn from the same Pacific region, may serve to designate its negative aspect'. 'Negatively, the supernatural is *tabu*, not to be lightly approached, because, positively, it is *mana*, instinct with a power above the ordinary.'[1] Throwing his argument and conclusion into technical form, he claims that anthropology must substitute this *tabu-mana* formula for animismas a minimum definition of religion.[2]

Magic, rather than religion, is probably the term which seems to most of us more appropriate, when we listen to Codrington's account of the beliefs and practices of the Melanesian natives with their amulets and luck-bringing mascots of every kind. Nor would Dr. Marett, I think, deny that, from our modern point of view, their beliefs and practices belong essentially to the domain of magic in the ordinary meaning of the word. His contention rather is that, at this rudimentary stage, we are below the level at which the contrast between the religious and the magical can be profitably applied. 'Magico-religious' is in fact the term by which he would designate the stage in question. That expression, however, is not to be understood as if we were speaking of a stage at which distinctively magical beliefs and practices were as yet unknown,

[1] p. 99.

[2] In a paper published in 1909 in the *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*, 'The tabu-mana Formula as a Minimum Definition of Religion'. Cf. the essay on 'The Conception of Mana' in *The Threshold of Religion*.

or as if we had to seek the origin of all such beliefs and practices in the conception of *mana*. The reverse is rather the case. Magic in its most typical forms is essentially the projection of human desire and will by appropriate mimetic gestures or by the utterance of the appropriate spell; and nothing in savage life is more primitive and more universal than the belief in the efficacy of such performances. The roots of the belief may ultimately be found, as Dr. Malinowski suggests,[1] in the spontaneous words and acts in which overmastering passion or emotion finds expression. 'As the tension spends itself in these words and gestures . . . the desired end seems nearer satisfaction, we regain our balance, once more at harmony with life. And we remain with the conviction that the words of malediction and the gestures of fury have travelled towards the hated person and hit their target.' Hence the dramatic expression of emotion in the magical ritual. 'The sorcerer has, as an essential part of the ritual performance, not merely to point the bone dart at his victim, but with an intense expression of fury and hatred he has to thrust it in the air, turn and twist it as if to bore it in the wound, then pull it back with a sudden jerk. Thus not only is the act of violence, of stabbing, reproduced but the passion of violence has to be enacted.'[2] But however the modern psychologist may seek to explain to himself the situations and the frame of mind in which such a belief may have its origin, for the savage the power of magic is simply an ultimate fact in the constitution of his world. So Dr. Malinowski puts it, summing up his investigation of native belief among the islanders of the Western Pacific:

'Magic to the natives . . . is a specific power, essentially human, autonomous and independent in its action. This power is an inherent property of certain words, uttered with the performance of certain actions by the man entitled to do it through his social

[1] In his essay already quoted, p. 75. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 67.

traditions and through certain observances which he has to keep. The words and acts have this power in their own right, and their action is direct and not mediated by any other agency. Their power is not derived from the authority of spirits or demons or supernatural beings. It is not conceived as having been wrested from nature. The belief in the power of words and rites as a fundamental and irreducible force is the ultimate basic dogma of their magical creed.' [1]

The spell is the most important factor, and the appropriate spell for any given occasion is matter of tradition. Hence, as the efficiency of the performance depends entirely on the correct repetition of the precise formula, there naturally arises a class of specialists—the professional magicians or sorcerers—who are supposed to be the exclusive possessors of this secret knowledge handed down from generation to generation.

Magic in this sense is obviously independent of any *mana* beliefs, although there is no reason to regard it as psychologically more primitive or chronologically prior in point of fact. It appears in itself to open no pathway to religion. The conception of *mana*, on the other hand, is important, just because it offers the possibility of development in a definitely religious direction. The virtue inherent in the peculiar-looking stone for example (to take an extreme instance) may be conceived as operating in as purely magical a fashion as the words of the spell, and the savage's attitude towards the object may be only desire to possess himself of this occult power and use it to compass his selfish ends. But there is at least one difference observable. The power is not vested in himself but resides in an object. Insignificant as the difference may seem in the trivial instance quoted, the recognition of a power-not-himself may be all-important in the sequel. Did not Schleiermacher teach that the feeling of absolute dependence on a higher power is the inmost core of religion?

[1] *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, p. 427.

Sir James Frazer rightly makes this sense of dependence the fundamental characteristic of the religious attitude. His error lies in treating it as a process of reasoning arrived at by 'the deeper minds', after disillusionment had overtaken them while proceeding on the contrary hypothesis. Such a feeling must be regarded as already present in primitive man's emotional response to the wonders and terrors of his environment. The feeling of awe includes the sense of humility before the 'awful' power; and if the 'birth of humility', in Dr. Marett's phrase, is but another name for the genesis of religion, then the history of religion may legitimately be treated as a continuous development from the vague *mana* beliefs of primitive savagery. Progress will consist in the attainment of clearer and worthier conceptions of the nature of the power or powers with which we have to do, and a correspondingly truer idea of the way in which they should be approached and the kind of service which they demand of man.

Before leaving the antithesis of Religion and Magic, it may be well to note that several writers of repute—Dr. Jevons and M. Durkheim, for example—have sought to base the distinction between them on the social or communal character of the former and the individualistic or anti-social character of the latter. 'Religion,' says Dr. Jevons, 'is the worship of the gods of a community by the community for the good of the community.' [1] The sorcerer or magician as such, on the other hand, is comparable to a private practitioner whose services are invoked by individuals for selfish and oftenest nefarious ends. The practices of the private magician may be—were indeed originally—based on precisely the same system of beliefs about the world and the way things happen as that implied in the religious cult of the community. The same powers

[1] *Introduction to the Study of Comparative Religion*, p. xv.

may be invoked, and similar processes put in operation: the sole difference consists in the ends which the operators have in view. The magician works for a selfish or anti-social end whether it be directly anti-social, as in the case of private revenge, involving the death or injury of a clansman, or the pursuit of selfish advantage, which seems to be attained more or less at the expense of the community, or at least in complete disregard of its interests. Public opinion condemned the first set of practices as nefarious and looked, as a matter of fact, with disfavour on any kind of private traffic with the unseen powers.

Now it is undoubtedly true that in the course of time magic, like sorcery, has become what the logicians call a dyslogistic term, a term of bad repute. It has had stamped upon it the sense of something illicit, something condemned by the common sentiment—associations which culminate in the popular designation of 'the black art'. According to medieval conceptions the blackness of the art consisted in the fact that it was believed to imply a trafficking with evil spirits. But a historical survey would rather suggest that the bad repute into which magic fell was due to the fact that the whole apparatus of magical practice—the spells and charms and waxen images and so forth, which are the magician's stock-in-trade—represented a system of beliefs about the world which had no longer a place in either the scientific or the religious creed of the community. The degradation of magic thus belongs to a later stage of culture, and we simply invite confusion if we attempt to set up a distinction between primitive religion and primitive magic on the basis of such associations. Rites and ceremonies are designated magical on account of the beliefs they imply about the world and the way in which desired results can be brought about. At the savage level the beliefs in question are held by every one, and they find as emphatic expression in public ceremonies intended to promote the good of the

community as in the most sinister private rites. Rain-making is an obvious example of a distinctively magical performance; yet it is a public function carried through by the accredited representative of the community for the general good. So it was, we have seen, with the garden magic and the canoe magic of the Melanesians. And the same is true of the multitudinous rites of vegetation magic, found all the world over: the ideas underlying them are of a purely magical character, and that character is not affected either by their beneficent purpose or by their frequently communal nature. The confusion which is introduced by the attempt to differentiate religion and magic on the lines suggested is well exemplified in the case of the Intichiuma rites of the Central Australian natives. The ceremonies in question have for their object the increase of the totem animals or plants, and they are obviously magical in character. Yet they are pre-eminently a social function, the central feature, in fact, of the annual gathering at which the clan celebrates its corporate unity. Hence M. Durkheim looking to their intensely social character selects these totemistic rites as the typical example of religion in an elementary form, while Sir James Frazer, looking to the essentially magical features of the ceremonies, maintains, on the contrary, that these Australian tribes are destitute of religion altogether. Whether the ritual practices of the Australian natives really imply religious feelings and beliefs will be best determined by the reader for himself after duly considering the nature of the ceremonies in question as described in the following chapter.

CHAPTER III

ELEMENTS OF RELIGION AMONG THE AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES: CLAN RELIGION AND TOTEMISM

The Australian tribes are socially organized on a totemistic basis. Each tribe, that is to say, is divided into certain smaller social groups or 'clans', each of which is named from some material object, most commonly an animal or plant, with which the group as a whole, and each member of it, is supposed to be specially related by natural descent or otherwise. Thus we have the kangaroo clan, the emu clan, the lizard clan, the plum-tree clan, and the widely distributed witchetty grub clan. The Intichiuma or multiplication rites referred to at the close of the preceding chapter are ceremonies by which the Australian tribes believe that they ensure the fertility of the totem plant or animal during the ensuing season.

The rites frequently centre round one of the sacred rocks or stones scattered over the country, which commemorate incidents in the lives of the mythical ancestors of the clan—stones which may mark, for example, the spot where the ancestor finally disappeared into the ground at the close of his earthly life. These stones are supposed to represent the totemic ancestor of the clan, human in form but sharing all the qualities of the animal or vegetable species which gives the clan its name. They thus constitute a permanent reserve of animal or vegetable life: and on this reserve the clan annually draws to ensure the reproduction of the particular species. The men of the witchetty grub clan, for example, leave the camp and move in solemn procession through the country till they reach a huge block of quartz with small round stones lying round it. This block represents the witchetty grub as an adult. The leader strikes the block with a wooden instrument, at the same time uttering a chant whose object is to invite the animal to lay eggs. This is repeated

with the small stones, which are regarded as the eggs of the animal, and with one of which he rubs the stomach of each of his assistants. This done, they all descend a little lower to the foot of a cliff, also celebrated in the myths of the ancestral period (Alcheringa), at the base of which is another stone, also representing the witchetty grub. The leader strikes it in a similar fashion, and the men accompanying him do the same, with branches of a gum tree which they have gathered on the way; and all this goes on in the midst of chants renewing the invitation previously addressed to the animal. About ten different spots are visited in turn, some of which may be distant a mile or more from the others.

The meaning of striking the sacred stones is to detach some dust, the grains of which are regarded as so many germs of life. The branches serve to scatter this precious dust in all directions, so that it may accomplish its fertilizing work. The scattering of the dust is a typical procedure with many clans. By such means they believe that they assure an abundant reproduction of the species in question. In other cases young men open their veins and let the blood flow upon the sacred rock. The men of the clan are relatives of the plant or animal whose name they bear, and accordingly the same principle of life is in them, especially in their blood. Hence the object of the latter practice is to revivify the virtues of the stone and reinforce its efficiency.

In the emu clan (to take another example) they do not use sacred stones or anything resembling them. The leader and some of his assistants sprinkle the ground with their blood, and on the ground thus soaked they trace lines in various colours representing the different parts of the body of an emu. They kneel round this design and chant a monotonous hymn. From the pictured emu to which this chant is addressed, and consequently from the blood which has served to make it, they believe that vivifying

principles go forth which animate the embryos of the new generations, and thus prevent the species from disappearing.

The efficacy of these rites is never doubted by the native; he is convinced that they must produce the expected results by a kind of necessity. If events deceive his hopes, he merely concludes that the efficacy of the rites has been counteracted by the sorcery of some hostile group. It never enters his mind that the desired result could be obtained by any other means. Hence, if, by chance, the vegetation comes up, or the animals produce, before he has performed his Intichiuma, he supposes that another Intichiuma has been celebrated underground by the ancestors, and that the living reap the benefit of this subterranean ceremony.

If we look, then, simply at the nature of the ceremonies and the beliefs that underlie them, there seems nothing here but magic of the absurdest kind. But their religious significance becomes apparent, M. Durkheim urges, when we realize all the circumstances that attend their celebration, and the whole atmosphere, as we may say, of this annually recurring festival. The life of the Australian natives 'passes alternately through distinct phases. Sometimes the population is broken up into little groups who wander about independently of one another, engaged in the various occupations. Each family lives by itself, hunting or fishing, attending, in short, to the necessary food-supply. Their whole time is occupied in these economic activities, and there is little or no excitement.' Spencer and Gillen speak of 'the peaceful monotony' of this part of the native's life. But at certain seasons the population concentrates and gathers at determined points for a length of time varying from several days to several months. The emotional contrast here is complete. From the peaceful monotony of his ordinary existence the individual is plunged into an atmosphere of collective excitement. In his ordinary or profane life he observes of course the customary taboos, but otherwise his religion

is, at it were, in abeyance. There are no stated and regularly recurring occasions, as in civilized communities, for assembling together for religious purposes. But at these annual gatherings the clan is everywhere in the foreground. The meeting is held at some spot sacred in the mythical history of the race, or hallowed at least by the associations of communal life. The sacred emblem of the clan meets the clansman on every side. His individual life with its casual interests has fallen from him; he lives simply as a member of the clan, bathed as it were in the sentiment of a common life.

Magical and ridiculous as the ceremonies seem to us, they are gone about with all the solemnity of a religious observance. During the proceedings described, the men engaged observe throughout a rigorous fast. While the clan remains encamped awaiting the result of their efforts, the religious atmosphere is maintained. Attention continues to be concentrated on the totem and its sacred character; there is an intensification of all the taboos affecting it. When their expectations are at last realized—when the grubs appear in abundance (as of course they usually do) or when the young men bring back a big bag of kangaroos from the forest—the long series of rites culminates in a sacramental meal, in which the chief, followed by the old men, solemnly eats a small portion of this sacred animal, mystically renewing in this act of communion the blood-kinship which unites the members of the clan and of the animal species. What would be sacrilege for a profane person in the ordinary moments of his existence—the eating of the totem—becomes now the most profoundly religious act of his life, for it has been led up to by the whole series of rites which have preceded it. He has been admitted to the fellowship of sacred things, and has himself acquired, for the time being, a sacred character. If then we find, at the heart of these seemingly magical rites, ideas of mystical communion

which have played so great a part in subsequent history, how, M. Durkheim asks, can we dream of denying their essentially religious character?

It is true that this primitive religion is without the idea of a god, as an anthropomorphic being to be approached by prayer or offerings. The totem is not a god in that sense. For it is not any individual animal that is reverenced as the totem, but the species as a whole, or rather the life-principle which is present in each individual of the species (as also, according to their belief, in the individual members of the clan) and which lives on unaffected by the death of any particular man or animal. Again, the use of the totemic species as food is not interdicted to members of other groups within the tribe. Its use as food is therefore familiar. Indeed, the very object of the multiplication ceremonies is to provide an abundant supply of that particular food for the other tribesmen.[1] Hence it conveys an erroneous impression to speak of the totem as the object of *worship*. It is noteworthy in this connexion, as Durkheim emphasizes, that the *images* of totemic beings are more sacred than the beings themselves—the *churinga*, for instance, with the totemic emblem, or any semi-diagrammatic figure traced upon the ground. 'In certain rites the image of the totem is traced upon a place that has been previously sprinkled and saturated with human blood. . . . When the design has been made, the faithful (we are told) remain seated before it in an attitude of the purest devotion. If we give the word a sense corresponding to the mentality of primitive man, we may say that they adore it.'[2] The totemic image is in short, as

[1] Hence Sir James Frazer held at one time that this was the origin of Totemism; it took its rise, namely, as a system of co-operation among sections of a tribe for the magical supply of food, the Emu clan multiplying emus, the Kangaroo clan kangaroos, the Witchetty Grub clan witchetty-grubs, and so forth. He afterwards reflected that such a design was beyond the conception of savages. Nevertheless that is how it actually works.

[2] Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, p. 126.

it were, the heraldic badge or emblem of the clan; it is to the clansmen the symbol of their corporate unity. In respect of the emotions which it is capable of exciting, it may fitly be compared to the *flag*, the symbol of his country, for which the soldier will lay down his life. The symbol is the natural rallying-point of the collective emotion; but however intense the emotions which gather round it, however sacred the emblem, it would not occur to us to think of it as a god, either in its primitive or in its modern shape. These Australian rites, however, are all the more interesting and historically important because they exhibit to us in their most elementary form the sentiments of collective unity out of which the idea of the tribal god was evolved by races of a culture considerably more advanced.

So far we have been following Durkheim's sympathetic interpretation of these rites, and it must be admitted that he makes out a good case for ascribing to them, in certain of their features, a genuinely religious character. It is to be noted, however, that, for Durkheim and the 'sociological' school to which he belongs, the absence from the rites of anything corresponding to a god—an objective Power which is addressed in worship—instead of being a puzzling feature which makes the ordinary man hesitate to apply to them the term religious, constitutes precisely the feature of these 'Elementary Forms of the Religious Life' which most evokes their sympathy. Seeing in religion a purely sociological phenomenon, in other words an expression of the forces by which a social group imposes its authority upon its constituent units and ensures thereby the conditions of its own existence, this school tends to regard the whole divine apparatus of the higher religions as at bottom only symbolic of the social consciousness which unifies and sustains in being any given human society. 'The phenomena which we call religious', says Durkheim, 'are those which consist in obligatory beliefs

connected with definite features relating to objects given in these beliefs.' And 'whatever is obligatory', he further tells us, 'is of social origin. We do not defer spontaneously to any orders unless they come from something more exalted than ourselves. But if one does not pass beyond the domain of experience, there is no moral power above the individual except that of the group to which he belongs. For empirical science the only thinking being which is greater than man is society.' Such a view appears to evade altogether the question of the objective truth of religious beliefs as assertions about the nature of the universe; they are sufficiently justified, it would appear, if regarded as 'collective representations', essential to the maintenance of the social structure. The religious and the social become for the school identical terms. 'In a general way', Durkheim has himself said, 'a society has all that is necessary to arouse the sensation of the Divine in minds, merely by the power it has over them; for to its members it is what a God is to its worshippers. The God of the clan can be nothing else than the clan itself.'

But it is one thing to insist that religion is at the outset predominantly an affair of the community, and that society is the medium through which man becomes a rational and a moral being; it is quite another thing to offer as the solid core of religion the dutiful attitude of the individual towards the social structure of which he is a member. The emphasis recently laid on the former considerations has proved of great value in the historical study of religion, especially of early religion; but to make the latter assertion is to proclaim all religion, as it has historically existed —all religion in the ordinary meaning of the term—to be a collective hallucination which fantastically transforms into objective realities the internal structure of society itself. A society may well prove a helpful analogy even in the profoundest discussions of the relations of God and man, but the God of such discussions will not be simply the

reflected image of some concrete human commonwealth. Religion, as Professor Webb puts it,[1] is incorrigibly 'cosmological' in character: it makes assertions about the nature of the universe as a whole, and assumes an attitude towards the universe as a whole, which is dependent on the truth of these assertions. The systematic denial by the French sociologists of this objective significance, which religions at a higher level obviously claim for themselves, is in reality an inheritance from Comte's unnatural severance of man from nature and his resolve to content himself, for religious purposes, with a 'subjective synthesis' of Humanity alone, as a self-contained and self-creative Being to which he transfers the attributes of deity.

It is really impossible, however, to cut man loose from nature in this way, and unsophisticated religion does not make the attempt. It accepts man as part of a larger universe and strives from the outset to determine the nature of the environing powers and man's relation to them. In a suggestive section of the essay already referred to,[2] Dr. Malinowski points out how in the very totemistic beliefs and ceremonies which we have been considering we may detect the germs of the religious conception of Providence. 'To primitive men, never even under the best of conditions quite free from the threat of starvation, abundance of food is a primary condition of normal life.' Food is the absolutely central fact in savage life, and naturally on that account gathers round it ceremonies of a religious character.

'Firstfruit offerings of a ritual nature, harvest ceremonies, big seasonal feasts in which crops are accumulated, displayed, and in one way or another sacralized, play an important part among agricultural peoples. Hunters, again, or fishers, celebrate a big catch or the opening of the season of their pursuit by feasts and ceremonies at which food is ritually handled, the animals propitiated or worshipped. All such acts express the joy of the com-

[1] *Group Theories of Religion*, p. 151.

[2] *Op. cit.*, pp. 42–3.

munity, their sense of the great value of food, and religion through them consecrates the reverent attitude of man towards his daily bread. . . . If we thus consider that food is the main link between man and his surroundings, that by receiving it he feels the forces of destiny and providence, we can see the cultural, nay, biological importance of primitive religion in the sacralization of food. We can see in it the germs of what in higher types of religion will develop into the feeling of dependence upon Providence, of gratitude, and of confidence in it.'

Other ceremonies more or less religious in character occupy an important place in the life of these tribes. They are generally connected with one or other of the physiological crises of human existence, such as birth, puberty, marriage, and death. Perhaps the best known, as well as the most interesting in their religious implications, are the initiation rites which everywhere among savages mark the passage from boyhood to manhood and the admission of the youths to the privileges and responsibilities of full-grown members of the tribe. The ordeals to which the novices have to submit—including circumcision and various forms of mutilation—are of a painful and sometimes cruel nature, making a severe demand upon the physical courage and endurance of the youths. The preparatory ceremonies extending over many days and nights put a further emotional strain upon the novices, who are present throughout, and ignorant of the precise nature of what is in store for them. The weird sounds of the bull-roarer, heard at intervals from the woods, play upon their fears: like the women and the uninitiated they have hitherto been taught to regard these sounds as the voice of Twanyirika, or Hobgoblin. As the central rites are approached the din becomes deafening and the women flee in terror to their tents and hide their heads under their rugs. All that is done is intended, as Howitt says, 'to impress and terrify the boy in such a manner that the lesson may be indelible, and may govern the whole of his future life'. As Dr.

Malinowski expresses it, 'the light of tribal revelation bursts upon him from out of the shadows of fear, privation and bodily pain'. The natives themselves speak of the effect of initiation as a species of new birth. In a myth the boys are said to be swallowed by a supernatural being and born again as grown men.

The part played by the bull-roarer in these rites is to more civilized minds the most extraordinary feature of the ceremonies; for it is, in a sense, the central mystery which is eventually revealed to the wounded and still suffering lad. The bull-roarer is nothing but a strip of wood attached to a string by means of which it is rapidly whirled in the air, giving rise to notes of a peculiarly 'fearsome' or unearthly quality. Yet Professor Haddon has described it with some reason as 'the most ancient and widely-spread sacred symbol in the world'. Inscribed with totemic devices, these instruments form the most sacred ceremonial objects of these Australian tribes. Immediately after the operation by which he has become a man, one of his guardians exhibits to the youth several of these wooden instruments, telling him that they, and not Hobgoblin, were the source of the alarming sounds that had lately filled the air: they are *churinga* (i.e. sacred), and on pain of death must never be shown or even mentioned to the women. At the same time he presses them upon the wound and assures the lad that they will help to heal it quickly. One might easily imagine that the exposure of the fraud which had been practised upon him up to that moment in the matter of Hobgoblin would have the effect of drying up the springs of his religious emotion altogether, and would promote a healthy scepticism in regard to any new object of veneration. But in the circumstances the savage mind does not work in that way. In the first place the lad is proud of his new position as 'a complete man'; and the secret with which he is entrusted is the symbol of all the privileges and responsibilities which as a tribesman

he must henceforth share. The day of his initiation means for him, therefore, the beginning rather than the end of his religious life. For the *churinga* of a tribe are its most treasured possessions. Deposited in some unfrequented spot—a small cave, it may be, whose entrance is carefully disguised—they are taken from this sacred storehouse only on important occasions, and hence are rarely seen even by the men. They carry back the life of the tribe to its remote beginnings—the Alcheringa, the time of the ancestors of which so many legends are told. We need not wonder, therefore, at the magical virtues attributed to them or the quasi-religious veneration in which they are held. When an Australian black, rubbing one of these bull-roarers against his stomach, declares that it makes him 'strong' and 'wise' and 'glad' and 'good', his theology is no doubt deplorable, but his religion is in its way genuine enough.[1]

No account of the Australian aborigines would be complete without some reference to the keen dispute which arose a quarter of a century ago between Andrew Lang and the dominant school of anthropologists as to the nature of savage religion. Accepting the reports of Howitt and others about the existence among certain Australian tribes of the belief in a tribal All-Father, and connecting their reports with similar statements by others about savage tribes in widely separate parts of the world, Lang argued that the belief in a Supreme Being, benevolent in character, who lent his sanction to moral conduct, was actually reached by primitive man at a very early stage. Lang's theory was brought into discredit by some of its theological supporters, who hailed it as a new version of the old idea of a primeval revelation of religious truth.

[1] Cf. Marett, *Threshold of Religion*, p. 191, and the whole paper on 'Savage Supreme Beings and the Bull-roarer'.

Lang himself expressly disclaimed any such interpretation of his views; and as he lays stress throughout on the fact that neither prayers nor offerings are made to the 'high gods' by the savages who are said to believe in them, it is obvious that his disclaimer must be accepted as sincere. Prayer is generally accepted as the vital test of religious belief and its most spontaneous expression: it would certainly be so regarded by the theologians in question. But Lang's view, as he himself indicates, really took shape in his mind as a protest against Frazer's theory (which we have already criticized) of the origin of religion in human selfishness and cringing flattery of superior powers. 'If we can raise at least a case for consideration', he says, 'in favour of this non-utilitarian belief in a deity not approached with prayer or sacrifice, we also raise a presumption against the theory that gods are invented in the despair of magic, as powers out of whom something useful could be got, powers with good things in their gift, things that men were ceasing to believe that they could obtain by their own magical machinery. The strong primal gods, unvexed by prayer, were not invented as recipients of prayer.'[1] In a larger reference his polemic is against Tylor's animism, as developed, more especially by Herbert Spencer, into the 'ghost' theory, which finds the origin of all beliefs in the worship of ancestral spirits. His argument, as he states it himself, is that 'the first dim surmises as to a Supreme Being need not have arisen (as on the current anthropological theory) in the notion of spirits at all. As soon as he had the idea of "making" things, the savage might conjecture as to a Maker of things which he himself had not made, and could not make. He would regard this unknown Maker as a "magnified non-natural man". This conception of a "magnified non-natural man" who is a Maker being given, his power would be recognized, and fancy would clothe one who had made such useful

[1] *Magic and Religion*, p. 12.

things with certain other moral attributes, as of fatherhood, goodness and regard for the ethics of his children. In all this there is nothing "mystical", nor anything, as far as I can see, beyond the limited mental powers of any beings that deserve to be called human'.[1] His general theory is, in short, 'that the chief Being was not evolved out of ghosts, but came to be neglected as ghost-worship arose'.[2]

In support of the existence of such a belief among the Australian natives Lang relies chiefly upon Howitt's reports about 'the supernatural anthropomorphic being in whom the tribes of the south-east of Australia believe under different names'. Daramulun, Baiamai, Bunjil, Mungan-ngaua, Pirnmehecal, are some of these names. All these are spoken of as 'father'; Mungan-ngaua has no other name than 'Father of all of us'. Mungan, or Father, Howitt explains, is a term expressing a group-relationship; it is common to address the elder men as father. It is necessary, therefore, he adds, to 'guard carefully against such a feeling toward Mungan-ngaua as is embodied in our expression "Our Father in Heaven". Mungan-ngaua is the Headman in the sky-country, the analogue of the Headman of the tribe on the earth.' Of most of those mentioned it is said that they lived at one time on the earth and taught the ancestors of the tribe in question the use of weapons and implements, and in particular gave them their laws, instituted all their ceremonies, and taught them what food to eat. In some cases they are said to have made men and women, there having been previously only animals, birds, and reptiles. They ascended afterwards to the sky and in some cases they are identified with one or other of the constellations. Being thus conceived as the source of tribal law and custom, they are naturally thought of as interested in its continued observance. 'Daramulun

[1] *The Making of Religion*, Preface to second edition, pp. ix–x.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. xx.

can see people, and is very angry when they do things that they ought not to do, as when they eat forbidden food.' But he is not thought of as actively intervening to punish any breach of social duty either in the present life or in a future state of existence. The idea of a future life as a scheme of rewards and punishments for deeds done in the body is markedly absent from primitive thought as a whole. Hence if Daramulun, under that or any other name, is spoken of as the 'guardian' of morality, that can only mean that he represents, in a figure for the more thoughtful minds, the sacredness and inviolability of tribal custom. In general, however, the supernatural Headman, being a *roi fainéant* so far as present activity is concerned, plays little part in the religious life of the natives. Pirnmehecal, we are told, is 'a gigantic man living above the clouds, and as he is of a kindly disposition and harms no one, he is seldom mentioned, but always with respect'.

Lang was undoubtedly right in repudiating the suggestion of Tylor, Frazer, and others that savage beliefs on this point, as reflected in the statements quoted, are really borrowings by the natives from the theistic teaching of travellers and missionaries with whom they have been brought in contact within comparatively recent times. Of course the phraseology of many reports, especially by missionaries who had made no careful study of the savage mind, is obviously often coloured by the prepossessions of the reporters, and must be discounted accordingly. But that the beliefs, such as they are, are of ancient and local growth is conclusively proved, in the first place, by the early dates of many of the reports; secondly, by the secrecy which is frequently maintained about the beliefs by the natives, the knowledge being entirely restricted to the initiated men; and, thirdly, by the absence of prayer to the supernatural beings in question—an attitude of mind which is quite incompatible with the supposition that the belief was derived from missionary teaching. But on the other hand

Lang himself seems, in certain of his earlier statements at all events, to read more into the beliefs than the best authenticated accounts will fairly warrant. Daramulun is said to 'see people' and one of Howitt's informants described him as 'able to go anywhere and do anything'; but to ascribe 'omniscience' and 'omnipotence' to Daramulun and his *aliases* on the strength of such statements is to take the statements altogether out of their context. Omniscience and omnipotence are attributes rarely ascribed to their deities by races at a much higher stage of culture; even Olympian Zeus in Homer falls short of such a standard. And even a term like 'the high Gods' is misleading as applied to these glorified Headmen.

Lang offers two explanations of the origin of the savage beliefs in question. The first is man's natural tendency 'to attribute every institution to a primeval inventor or legislator'. Here he is of course applying the recognized canon of anthropological research which sees in so many stories of the gods and their doings an attempted explanation of traditional rites whose origin and meaning had been forgotten. To this extent he is on sure ground: it is primarily as the founders of the initiation rites and other tribal ceremonies that Daramulun and the rest are reverenced. But the reverence paid them in that capacity does not involve their godship in the ordinary sense of the term. If they are immortal in the sense of having neither beginning of years nor end of days, they are merely, as Howitt remarks, 'in that state in which, these aborigines believe, every one would be if not prematurely killed by evil magic'. Their position as primeval inventors or legislators certainly does not imply their recognition as Maker or Creator of the world and all that is therein. Lang, however, considers that the latter conclusion is really reached by the natives along a second line of thought, as an answer, namely, to their speculative questionings about the origin of things.

'I have suggested', he says, speaking in this particular connexion about South African religions, 'that early man, looking for an origin of things, easily adopted the idea of a Maker, usually an unborn man, who was before Death and who still exists. Round this Being crystallized affection, fear, and sense of duty; he sanctions morality and early man's remarkable resistance to the cosmic tendency, his notion of unselfishness. That man should so easily conceive a maker and father seems to me very probable; to my critics it is a difficulty. But one of Dr. Callaway's native informants remarks: "When we asked, 'By what was the sun made?' they said 'By Umvelinquanyi'. For we used to ask when we were little, thinking that the old men knew all things." What a savage child naturally asks about, his yet more savage ancestors may have pondered. No speculation seems more inevitable.'

This sounds well, but the child's question is in a sense an idle one, for if God be named to him as the Maker of the sun, that only leads, as we know, to the further question 'who made God ?' and as a rule creation-myths have singularly little to do either with religion or morality. The question of creation in the strict sense—an absolute beginning of the world and all that it contains—does not present itself to the savage mind at all. As Dr. Malinowski remarks *à propos* of the Melanesian attitude to magic: 'About the beginnings of magic they know as little, or are occupied as little, as about the beginnings of the world. Their myths describe the origin of social institutions and the peopling of the world by man. But the world is taken for granted, and so is the magic.'[1] Among the Australian aborigines, the same state of mind is revealed. Their mythology, as we have seen, concerns itself chiefly with the origin of social institutions or useful inventions. In some of the myths there is also mention of the making of men and women, the planting of trees upon a bare earth, involving a certain formative activity on the part of Bunjil or Daramulun, but the world in its main physical features is taken for granted, and what is 'made' is usually supposed

[1] *Argonauts of the Western World*, p. 403.

to be shaped out of some pre-existing material. Thus in the still more savage myths of the Arunta in Central Australia, the making of human beings is attributed to two beings whose name means 'self-existing', and who dwelt in the western sky. There existed up till then, according to the legend, only rudimentary creatures living by the salt water, with no distinct limbs or sense organs, presenting the appearance of human beings all doubled up into a rounded mass, in which only the outline of the different parts of the body could be vaguely seen. Spying these formless creatures in the distance, the two beings referred to descended with their great stone knives, and by a series of deft slits and cuts transformed the shapeless monsters into men and women.[1] A grotesque story of this kind possesses no religious value for the savage mind. The two makers or shapers have no further relation to mankind and their history; they are imagined strictly *ad hoc*, and after this episodic act disappear from view altogether. It certainly indicates a cultural advance when the south-eastern tribes assign the function of Maker to the same Being whom they suppose to have founded their social institutions and to have instructed their ancestors in the use of tools and the beneficent arts of life. It is natural in these circumstances to regard such a Being as sanctioning morality. But we have clearly no right, in using such a phrase, to think of an ethical code transcending the morality already embodied in tribal custom and solemnly impressed upon the young men at their initiation. Even the notion of unselfishness, specially singled out by Lang, is not foreign to that morality. Unselfish co-operation for the general good is in point of fact the primary bond of human society, and naturally therefore takes a foremost part in the exhortations which accompany admission to the tribal brotherhood.

[1] Spencer and Gillen, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*, p. 388.

CHAPTER IV

THE COMMUNAL OR SOCIAL CHARACTER OF EARLY RELIGION: THE TRIBAL GOD

I HAVE dwelt at some length on the beliefs and practices of the Australian aborigines, because they throw a vivid light upon the communal character of early religion, and help us thereby to appreciate its sociological significance. As moderns we tend probably to think of religion as the most intensely personal of human concerns—an intimately personal communion of the individual with his God. Newman's sentence is often quoted: 'To every one of us there are but two beings in the whole world, himself and God;'[1] and Plotinus long ago described the aspiration of the soul as the 'flight of the Alone to the Alone'. But however personal a thing religion may become—and though this aspect may not be entirely absent (as Dr. Malinowski reminds us) even from its primitive manifestations—there is no doubt that in its origin it is predominantly a social phenomenon, an affair of the community as such; and to realize this is the first step towards a true understanding of early religious beliefs and practices. 'Religion in its psychological character', says Dr. Marett, is fundamentally a mode of social behaviour.'[2]

It is only within comparatively recent times that this point has been thoroughly grasped. It was brilliantly enforced by Robertson Smith in his lectures on *The Religion of the Semites*, published in 1889. His conclusions were based upon a penetrative analysis of the rites and customs of the Semitic tribes of Syria, Palestine, and the Arabian peninsula, and the volume has taken its place as an anthropological classic. The results are sometimes revolutionary. They dispose, for example, at the outset of the familiar

[1] In a sermon on the Immortality of the Soul, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. i.

[2] Preface to the first edition of *The Threshold of Religion*. Cf. his discussion of the subject in the fifth essay of the volume.

Latin tag, already quoted, which ascribes the origin of religion and of the gods to fear.

'However true it is, that savage man feels himself to be environed by innumerable dangers which he does not understand, and so personifies as invisible or mysterious enemies of more than human power, it is not true that the attempt to appease these powers is the foundation of religion. From the earliest times, religion, as distinct from magic or sorcery, addresses itself to kindred and friendly beings, who may indeed be angry with their people for a time, but are always placable, except to the enemies of their worshippers or to renegade members of the community. It is not with a vague fear of unknown powers, but with a loving reverence for known gods who are knit to their worshippers by strong bonds of kinship, that religion in the only true sense of the word begins.'[1]

The 'fear' theory seems to picture the savage as a solitary individual cringing before the terrors of the unknown that surround him on every side. But man has always existed as a member of a social group united by ties of blood, and the blood-brotherhood is a power encompassing him, a power to which he trusts to defend him from his enemies, to avenge his wrongs or his death, to provide him in short with a 'little world' of the safe and familiar, a social cosmos within which he may ply his customary activities. The community is thus in a most real sense the Providence of its individual members, interposed between them and the multitudinous dangers of a hostile or indifferent world. To the community, therefore, or the community's god, they turn in their need to supplicate continued favour and support, but always with trust and confidence, as to a power which has befriended them in the past. The tribal god is in a manner the community personified, and is conceived as bound to it by ties of blood. Semitic religion, like primitive society everywhere, was founded on kinship. 'Kinship was the only recognized type of friendly relation between man and man', says Robertson Smith: it was

[1] *Religion of the Semites*, p. 54.

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'therefore the only type on which it was possible to frame the conception of a permanent friendly relation between a group of men and a supernatural being'.[1] The god and his worshippers are of the same stock; they form together one society.

We must remember, moreover, that, at the stage of civilization we are speaking of, the individual in the modern sense of the word has not yet emerged. The community lives of course only in its individual members; but these have not so far attained independent selfhood. It has often been remarked, in connexion with the question of personal immortality, how late the desire for such immortality, or the need of it, awoke among the Hebrews. The explanation of this is simply the extent to which the individual was still merged in the continuous historical life of the family and the nation. It was not till the time of the later prophets that this state of things was changed. 'In Jeremiah and Ezekiel', it has been said, 'we can see the birth of the individual taking place before our eyes.'[2] At the still more primitive stage of which we are now speaking, men's lives are spent for the most part in a routine of activities raised but little above the animal level; and, for the rest, their conduct is determined, even to its insignificant details, by the unquestioned authority of tribal custom. Critical reflection, individual intiative, are almost entirely absent. As it has been expressed, the individual at this stage is a tribesman rather than a man. And, if not himself in the full sense a person, there can be little that is distinctively personal in his relations to his god. It is solely as a tribesman that the individual has the right of approach to the god or any claim upon his bounty; and as such he can have no special requests to urge. As Robertson Smith says:

'It was a national, not a personal, providence that was taught by ancient religion. So much was this the case that in purely personal

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 50–1.
[2] A. B. Davidson, *Theology of the Old Testament*, p. 358.

concerns the ancients were very apt to turn, not to the recognized religion of the family or of the state, but to magical superstitions. The gods watched over a man's civic life, they gave him his share in public benefits, the annual largesse of the harvest and the vintage, national peace, or victory over enemies and so forth; but they were not sure helpers in every private need, and above all they would not help him in matters that were against the interests of the community as a whole.' [1]

Hence worship is essentially a public function, a gathering of the people on certain stated occasions, when they approach the god with gifts and renew the ancient bond or covenant between him and them. These occasions or festivals were usually of a seasonal character, as in the case of the Jews. Thrice in the year every male Israelite was required to 'see the face of Yahweh' with an offering in his hand. The chief feature of such gatherings was the sacrificial meal, for which an animal victim was slaughtered, and at which the god and his worshippers, meeting at the same table and eating and drinking together, reaffirmed the ties of kinship and mutual obligation which bound them together. Although the meal possesses what we may call this sacramental character, it is a feast in the ordinary human sense of the term, with all its joyous and even jovial associations. 'The identity of religious occasions and festal seasons may indeed be taken as the determining characteristic of the type of ancient religion generally; when men meet their god they feast and are glad together, and whenever they feast and are glad, they desire that their god shall be of the party.' [2]

The best example of such a tribal deity for our purposes —and the most interesting in view of his subsequent history—is Yahweh, the God of Israel. For Yahweh is, to begin with, little more than the national consciousness of the Israelitish tribes—the tribal god who inspires his worshippers with confidence and leads them to victory

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 263–4. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 255.

over their enemies. He was their god before they entered Canaan, while they still lived the life of pastoral nomads in the deserts to the south. He was not originally, therefore, a Palestinian deity; he was associated with either Mount Sinai or Horeb. But after the settlement of the Israelites in Canaan he became, by right of conquest, the god of the land, displacing the local gods of the Canaanitish inhabitants. The dominion of a tribal or national god is naturally co-extensive with the territory occupied by his people, and is limited to that territory. Beyond these bounds other gods have similar rights. David, for example, when he was driven forth from his own country by Saul, complained that he had been forced thereby to forsake the worship of Yahweh for that of other gods. Each of Israel's neighbours worshipped in the same way its distinctive tribal god; and the names of several of these have a splendid survival in Milton's catalogue of the fallen angels in the first book of *Paradise Lost*. For Milton the gods of the heathen were 'false gods', evil spirits who deluded their worshippers, and that was the traditional view of the Christian Church; but for the Israelites, at least in the earlier period of their history, there was no such implication. These 'strange gods' were gods by the same right as Yahweh, only less powerful. It was in the natural course of things that each race or people should have its own god. The Jews spoke of themselves as Yahweh's 'peculiar people'; and in the mouth of the Prophets the phrase became charged with a new significance, which it retains in Christian usage. But originally it simply expressed the natural relation between any community and its god. Chemosh was the god of the Moabites, and the Moabites were the peculiar people of Chemosh, in precisely the same sense. The Moabites looked to Chemosh to lead them to victory; and when they suffered a reverse they attributed it, exactly like the Israelites, to the fact that Chemosh was wroth with them for some national sin or

falling away, and had temporarily withdrawn his countenance from them. So Mesha, King of Moab, records, on the famous inscribed stone now preserved in the Louvre, how Omri, King of Israel, had oppressed Moab for many days, 'for Chemosh was wroth with his people', but by the renewed favour of Chemosh victory had returned to his standard, the foreign yoke had been broken, and the Israelites ignominously driven off. Asshur—to take an example on a larger scale—was similarly the god under whose ensign the Assyrian monarchs launched their campaigns, whom they invoked to tread down their enemies, and in whose name they perpetrated atrocious cruelties upon their captives. For tribalism knows neither rights nor duties outside the circle of the tribe. The more completely the god identifies himself with his people, the fiercer blazes his fury against their enemies; and in the tribesman the thought that the national enemy is also the contemner of his nation's god seems to consecrate the worst excesses of revenge.

When we approach the question of early religion in this way, we see at once that it does not arise out of cosmological speculations about the origin of the world or of the making of the first man: these were stories that men told one another later. Early religion has to do with the solid realities of man's daily existence. It is the idealization and consecration of his social life and its activities. Clan religion, as it expresses itself in its ritual, is essentially the periodical celebration of the corporate unity of the blood-brotherhood, the tribe, or eventually, as in Israel, of the federated tribes or nation. Such celebrations are, according as we phrase it, the renewal of the covenant between the clansmen and their god, the renewal by them of their oath of allegiance, or simply the sacred festival of tribal or national unity. For to us it is obvious that the clan-god is the objectification of the clan-consciousness: it is the intensified expression of the sense of collective unity

which unites and inspires the group. 'The sense of being a people and the sense of being the people of Jehovah,' says Professor A. B. Davidson in his cautious way, 'if not identical feelings, reacted very powerfully upon one another.'[1] The clan-god is, as we might say, the ideal self of the clan, the personification of its history, its ideals, and its destiny. And yet that is not equivalent to saying that the god is just the abstract idea of the clan as such. As it has been put by a little known writer,[2] 'the god is primarily the *bringer of help*, that power in the clansman, and yet greater than himself, which enables him to accomplish more than he could do alone. When the clan attacks and overthrows an enemy, no one clansman has done it, nor have all the clansmen individually done it: the victory has been gained by the sum total of the clansmen *plus something more*. That something more is the god of the clan'. We are not moving here in the region of abstract ideas, and the primitive clansman is not wrong—is not deceived—in believing that the spirit of the clan is something greater than the numerical sum of its individual members. On the contrary, that is a truth which he verifies experimentally every time he is carried out of himself in some crisis of patriotic enthusiasm, or in any movement of communal excitement. The recurring rites of clan religion have for their object the periodic intensification, and therefore the continued maintenance, of common life, of membership in a greater whole, recognized by the individual as a higher power and providence on which he is in every way dependent.

Religion and nationality are thus, at this stage, different aspects of the same thing. At the earliest stage, in fact, the two aspects are hardly distinguishable, and we may either say, with Dr. Jevons, that 'a religious community

[1] *Theology of the Old Testament*, p. 23.
[2] The late Canon Todd, *Politics and Religion in Ancient Israel*, p. 37.

is the earliest form of society',[1] or, with Mr. Hartland,[2] that 'religion is an expression of the social organization'. Custom represents for a primitive society both law and religion, and the mass of customary observances on which the structure of such a society rests were in their origin religious taboos, and observed as such before they acquired the more mundane character of social laws. And what was thus religious in its origin continues to the end in such societies to be maintained under the aegis of religion. As the consecration of custom, religion thus becomes one of the great conservative forces in human affairs, important at an early stage in the development and maintenance of stable laws and institutions, but at a later stage obviously apt to be the resolute opponent of innovation, apt to cling to practices and beliefs that time has deprived of their meaning and usefulness.

Religion then, as the earliest form of the social consciousness, supplies the conditions of all further advance. It is only as a member of the social group, it may be truly said, that man becomes a rational being; for to social intercourse is due the concept, the name by which we designate to others a common object, as distinguished from the flux of private sensations or impressions. The objective world of our ordinary experience is frequently described therefore by psychologists and philosophers as a world of 'social objects', and on such objectivity rests the possibility of science. And, again, it is as a member of a community that man is potentially a moral being. Morality is rightly felt to imply a sense of unconditional obligation. Hence philosophers of the old intuitional school used to speak as if we read off the moral laws like copy-headings on a divine blackboard. Moralists of the hedonistic school, on the other hand, used to spend much

[1] *Introduction to the History of Religion*, p. 101.

[2] Address to the Anthropological Section of the British Association, 1906.

time in discussing the conflict between the private good of the individual, which he naturally seeks, and the general good, which he is enjoined to pursue. 'Why, in fact, should I be moral?' They were not content unless they could show, as they hoped to be able to do, that pursuit of the general good was the surest path to the maximum amount of individual pleasure—in which case the idea of unconditional obligation might be dispensed with altogether, seeing that every man, as they said, pursues his own happiness without the necessity of any such injunction. But if we insist on stating the question in that way, the required coincidence between moral conduct and private happiness is really incapable of proof; and yet common sense acknowledges that the 'must' of duty is absolute, quite irrespective of the consequences to the individual. Right means one thing, expedient means something quite different. The right course of action and the expedient may doubtless often coincide, but to attempt to resolve the one into the other is felt by common sense to be simply abandoning the moral standpoint altogether.

The hedonistic moralist, however, creates his difficulty for himself by the fictitious notion of the individual with which he operates. Man as an individual, Comte truly said, exists only 'in the exaggerated abstractions of modern metaphysicians'. Born into a social group, primitive man finds his course of action prescribed to him at every turn by the organized customs of the group. Custom, as we know, is the original of what is afterwards formulated as law and morality (the double sense still persists in the Greek *νόμος* and the Latin *mores*); and in a primitive society custom speaks with an authority more absolute than belongs to any law, divine or human, at a later day. It represents a solidarity of public opinion far more unanimous and unbending than is the case in civilized communities of a more complex type, where individual independence has begun to assert itself. At the savage stage

the authority of tribal custom is simply unquestioned: every one does as his neighbours do. Dissent is unknown. As it has been wittily put, 'the savage strictly complies with the Hegelian command that no man must have a private conscience'.[1] Here, then, you have the historical source of the categorical imperative: this is the form in which the sense of unconditional obligation first appears. When Howitt, the Australian explorer, tried to sophisticate a young native with whom he was speaking about the food prohibited during initiation, saying, 'But if you were hungry, and caught a female opossum, you might eat it, if the old men weren't there, might you not?' the youth replied simply, 'I could not do that; it would not be right'; and he could give no other reason than that it would be wrong to disregard the customs of his people.[2] The customs of a people, as Cicero says,[3] are precepts in themselves—precepts that have all the force of immutable morality; and thus it is that, in the primitive group, the pressure of social custom creates in the members of the group the super-individual conscience which is the permanent factor in moral conduct and the condition of all further advance.

The virtues fostered by clan-religion are, naturally, those which make for the cohesion of the group and its efficiency in war, which is a permanent feature of existence for these small wandering clans—obedience, endurance, courage, loyalty, and unhesitating self-sacrifice to the common cause. And as we have seen, the scope of primitive morality and primitive religion does not extend beyond the limits of the clan or tribe: stranger and enemy are synonymous terms, and no considerations of humanity intervene to mitigate the ferocity of intertribal warfare.

[1] Westermarck, *Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas*, i. 119.

[2] Fison atd Howitt, *Kamilaroi and Kurnai*, pp. 256 ff. (quoted by Westermarck, *Ibid.* i. 118).

[3] *De Officiis*, i. 41.

But narrow as is the range of tribal morality and religion, its importance as a stage on the way to higher things can hardly be over-rated. 'First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear.' The habits formed by the discipline of the clan, the virtues nourished by the sense of kinship, formed the natural seed-ground of the larger morality which embraces all mankind. The development of the one into the other is the history of human progress. Similarly, the materialism of early religion is redeemed, as Robertson Smith points out, by the fact of its communal character. 'The good things desired of the gods were the blessings of earthly life, not spiritual but carnal things . . . [but although] the ideal was earthly, it was not selfish. In rejoicing before his god, a man rejoiced with and for the welfare of his kindred, his neighbours and his country; and in renewing by a solemn act of worship the bond that united him to his god, he also renewed the bonds of family, social and national obligation.'[1] Hence even in its rudest forms religion was a moral force. Instead of being a noxious and superfluous after growth, according to the Enlightenment and Free-thought theory, religion is from the first, as Hegel called it, the bearer (*Träger*) of human civilization.

[1] *Religion of the Semites*, p. 263.

CHAPTER V

ANCESTOR-WORSHIP AND NATURE-WORSHIP: SPIRITS AND GODS

Our discussion started in Chapter II with a critical consideration of Animism as a 'minimum definition' of primitive religion. According to Tylor savage philosophy, as well as the religious practices to which it leads, depend entirely on the idea of the soul as a phantasmal second self, distinct from the body and, though ordinarily resident in it, capable of excursions from it during sleep and of independent existence after bodily death. The evidence of this is derived from the dream-experiences in which persons appear to us whom we know to be either dead or (in a bodily sense) hundreds of miles away. Belief in the continued existence of the souls of the dead leads directly, Tylor argues, to ancestor-worship and, by analogy, to the belief in spirits or demons, including 'nature-spirits' and eventually the 'high gods' of later theology. In like manner Sir James Frazer has recently told us that, on the whole, he considers 'the fear of the human dead to have been probably the most powerful force in the making of primitive religion'.[1] And this, in a still more pronounced form, was the explicit theory of Herbert Spencer. 'Ghost-propitiation', he says, is the origin of all religion.[2] It will help to clarify our ideas if we consider briefly how much truth there is in the position thus assigned to Ancestor-worship in the history of man's religious ideas.

It is of course beyond doubt that the cult of ancestors, or as we might in many cases perhaps more accurately describe it, the tendance of the dead, is widespread among primitive races, and the rites associated with it form great part of the simple man's religion. It is also true that fear

[1] In the Preface to the abridged edition of *The Golden Bough*, dated June 1922.

[2] *Ecclesiastical Institutions*, p. 765.

or dread of the ghost is one of the operative motives, a motive which we may probably expect to find more predominant the ruder and more savage the conditions to which we go back. The spirits of the dead are supposed to be able to visit their displeasure upon the survivors, and it is easy to offend them. Hence in some funeral rites the elaborate precautions taken to prevent the dead man's ghost from finding the way back to the house he occupied in life. And a variety of other rites might be mentioned of an apotropaic or 'leave-us-alone' character—rites of 'riddance', as they have been called. Some of the offerings made to the dead were doubtless prompted by a desire to placate these dangerous neighbours. But on the other hand the common offerings of food and drink placed upon the tomb, the morsels set apart for the dead at the family meals, the festivals of commemoration at which the departed was regarded either as the host or as an invited guest, are most readily understood as the expression of natural affection and family piety. And against the savage's appeals to the ghost not to return and vex his friends has to be set the common primitive custom of burying the dead beside the family hearth. The spirits of enemies and strangers will, no doubt, be regarded as hostile, just as they were in life; and the ghosts of those who have died prematurely—youths and maidens who have been snatched away before they have tasted the sweets of life, and especially women who have died in childbirth—may be regarded with apprehension as bearing an instinctive grudge against the more fortunate survivors. But, with such exceptions, more or less intelligible, the spirit of a dead kinsman will be, in the nature of things, a friendly ghost, and will be so regarded by the living. 'The principles of ancestor-worship', says Tylor, 'keep up the social relations of the living world. The dead ancestor, now passed into a deity, simply goes on protecting his own family and receiving suit and service from them

as of old. The dead chief still watches over his own tribe, still holds his authority by helping friends and harming enemies, still rewards the right and sharply punishes the wrong.'[1] It is specially important to note, therefore, that only so far as the sentiments with which primeval man regards his dead contain the elements of natural affection or spontaneous respect for legitimate and beneficently exercised authority, can they form the starting point of what we afterwards know as ancestor-*worship*. The fear of malevolent spirits can never in itself be the germ of anything like religion as we now understand the term. Once more, therefore, we put the fear-theory aside.

In China, from the earliest times down to the present day, sacrifice to the ancestors of the family is the primary religious duty of every household. It symbolizes and keeps alive the filial piety which is so characteristic a feature of Chinese ethics and Chinese civilization. So it was also in ancient Rome, and the Chinese observances are almost identical with those of which we read in the worship of the Lares and Penates. In India and Japan ancestor-worship is also widely spread. Tylor says accordingly: 'The worship of the divine dead has been always from antiquity, as it is even now, the main faith of the larger half of mankind.'[2] Yet it may be pointed out that in none of the cases mentioned does this worship stand alone. It is the private cult in each case of the particular family; and that is combined in China with the public worship of Heaven and the powers of nature, as it was in Rome with the worship of the gods of the state. Moreover, although sacrifices are offered to them, the ancestors, as tutelary spirits, are still not on the level of these greater gods. They are 'spirits' rather than gods in the full sense of the term. And although the cult of heroes in Greek religion shows us examples of several hero-ancestors, who, in process of time, seem to acquire the higher status, yet even they remain to the end on a

[1] *Primitive Culture*, ii, p. 113. [2] *Anthropology*, p. 351.

different level from those who were conceived from the beginning as gods indeed.

Few accordingly have accepted Spencer's conclusion that the deified ancestor is the original type to which every species of godhead may be traced back. In successive chapters of his *Principles of Sociology*, Spencer sets out to prove (and proves to his own satisfaction) that Idol Worship, Fetish Worship, Animal Worship, Plant Worship, and finally Nature Worship, may all be explained in this way. We may take the last mentioned as a crucial instance: how does primitive man, on Spencer's theory, come to 'personalize', and in the sequel to adore, any striking natural object, or any of the great universal phenomena of nature, the sky, the earth, the sun, the moon, the wind, or the rainbow? Birth-names, Spencer solemnly replies, are often taken among uncivilized races from the incidents of the moment, and refer, for example, to the time of day or the state of the weather when the birth occurred. Thus we find among the American Indians, Tasmanians, and elsewhere, names like Dawn or Evening, Storm and Sunshine, Thunder and Rain. Such names denote originally a definite human individual. But the habit of giving such names, we may assume, is of immemorial antiquity. Hence, if we suppose an individual to have been named ages ago on such principles, we can readily understand how tradition would come in course of time to confuse the individual with the natural agent having the same name, and how there would result the 'personalizing of these natural objects and the ascription to them of human origins and human adventures'. Or again, on somewhat similar lines, he would derive the worship of the sun or moon from a literal interpretation of names given in eulogy to persons once on earth, as when (let us say) his courtiers adore some monarch as the Sun in whose favour his subjects bask, or when Omar Khayyam apostrophizes his Beloved as the Moon of his delight. 'In

such ways,' Spencer concludes, 'implicitly believing the statements of forefathers, the savage and semi-civilized have been compelled grotesquely to combine natural powers with human attributes and histories; and have thus been led into the strange customs of propitiating these great terrestrial and celestial objects by such offerings of food and blood as they habitually made to other ancestors.' Most people, I imagine, must feel that Spencer's complete satisfaction with his wonderful theory is the grotesquest feature in the case. Could any train of argument be more fantastically unconvincing?

At all events he made few converts, and it would now be generally acknowledged that nature-worship is not to be derived from ancestor-worship in this elaborately roundabout fashion, but must have independent motives behind it, by which it is sufficiently explained. So far, indeed, is ancestor-worship from being 'a key to all the mythologies', that it remains throughout a quite subordinate factor, which throws little light on the essential nature of religion or the main features of its development. The temptation to assign it a central position arose from the initial assumption of the animistic theory that the religious attitude in man is subsequent to, and dependent on, his realization of the distinction between body and soul and the separate existence of the latter. According to that theory, it is in virtue of the attribution to natural objects of a soul or spirit that they come to be regarded as objects of worship. It is the spirit located in them which is really worshipped, just as it is the spirit resident, at least temporarily, in the fetish of the modern savage which is supposed to explain its wonder-working properties. But we have seen reason to believe, in our previous discussion of the animistic hypothesis, that the religious attitude is discoverable at a much more primitive level. It is not because he believes there is a spirit located in it that the savage feels religiously towards some natural

object, but because it impresses him somehow as alive, as instinct with active force. For this level of experience Mr. Marett has suggested the name *Animatism*. The term is probably too like that from which it is specifically distinguished to take a permanent place in scientific nomenclature, but the distinction it is intended to denote is sufficiently plain. At the earlier stage it is not a god within the object that is worshipped; it is just the object itself—the moving water, let us say, of a spring or river—that is felt as wonderful and worshipful. When offerings are thrown directly into the water, we should speak more naturally and more correctly, Dr. Farnell suggests, if we described them as made not to the 'river god' but to the 'divine water'.[1] So Hesiod advises the traveller not to 'pass through the fair-flowing water of streams ere thou utterest a prayer, gazing at the fair torrent and having washed thy hands in the white and lovely water' (*Works and Days*, 737). 'The Nile and the Ganges', says Professor Menzies, 'did not become sacred by having a mythical being added to them as their spirit: they were themselves sacred beings.'[2] And we might compare Wordsworth's language about the sea in a famous sonnet:

> Listen! *the mighty Being* is awake,
> And doth with his eternal motion make
> A sound like thunder—everlastingly.

Similarly, it was not necessary for primitive man 'to suppose that the spring was haunted by a nymph, or the oak inhabited by a dryad, before he felt that the spring or the oak had a claim on him, and brought offerings to secure their friendship'. The epithets attached to certain Greek divinities sometimes give us a glimpse of the process by which the adoration of the natural phenomenon as such passed into the worship of a personal deity. 'The Athenians who worshipped Demeter χλόη, Demeter Green

[1] *Outline History of Greek Religion*, p. 46.
[2] *History of Religion*, p. 29.

Verdure, reveal an attitude of mind that is midway between Animatism, that religious perception of each striking thing or phenomenon in nature as itself mysteriously alive and divine, and "theism" (in its polytheistic form) which imagines it controlled by a personal deity.' So Helios the sun is personal and anthropomorphized in Homer; 'but we may well doubt if he was so for the average Greek, who merely kissed his hand to him every morning, or bowed to him on coming forth from his house, and who, regarding him merely as animate or "Living Sun", found it difficult to develop him into a free and complex individual person.' [1]

Nature-worship has thus an origin independent of beliefs about the dead, and it forms, as we shall see, the main channel through which, at a primitive level, specifically religious sentiments are aroused and developed. The swarms of demons or spirits with which the savage peoples the world around him are admittedly conceived by him animistically on the analogy of the souls of the dead. The action of a spirit is primitive man's explanation of any occurrence at all unusual, especially if it be of an unpleasant character; for most of the spirits he supposes to be, if not consistently hostile, at least easily swayed by caprice and apt to take a malicious delight in tricking him. His attitude towards these spirits is not, however, religious in the later sense of the word. The element of mystery and awe is absent: they are too much on his own level for that. There is in fact nothing worshipful in spirits as such; any offerings made to them are simply of the nature of bribes to buy off their hostility, just as, when hard pressed, a man may attempt to buy off a human foe. Thus Professor Moore, speaking of the religion of the masses in China even at the present day, says: 'Demons, ghosts, vampires, werewolves populate China as densely as its human inhabitants. They do all sorts of harm, from swallowing up the sun in

[1] Farnell, *Op. cit.*, p. 47. Cf. *Cults of the Greek States*, pp. 420–4.

an eclipse to making a blank of a candidate's mind in an examination; and life is an incessant battle with them. Man defends himself by magic and enlists the gods as allies by religion.'[1] I am not suggesting that, at the early stage we are at present contemplating, primitive man has already formed for himself the idea of gods as helpful beings whose aid he can invoke against these tricky, and mostly malevolent, spirits. All I mean to say is that it is not through any so-called 'worship' of the latter that the pathway lies to higher things. In the motley crowd of ubiquitous spirits there is little tendency to single out individuals and invest them with a concrete personality. Moreover, man's relations with any particular spirit are mostly of a casual nature; offerings are made to meet some emergency as it occurs; there is no regular worship recurring at stated intervals, as is the case at a local shrine. There is no attempt to establish permanent friendly relations. They are beings to be kept at a distance, and primitive man resorts to charms and spells of various kinds to prevent them from frustrating his efforts or doing him a mischief. We may agree therefore with Wundt, when he emphasizes the contrast between personal gods and demons and declares that 'religion in the narrower and proper sense of the word begins with the belief in gods'.[2]

Nature-worship finds its objects either in the great powers of nature, the most impressive and universal phenomena, such as Heaven or the sky, the sun, the moon, the dawn, the sunset, and the phenomena of the weather, rain, storm, thunder, and lightning, or in minor and local objects such as the spring or the river referred to above. 'Every country', says Professor Menzies, 'is studded with names which reveal to the scholar the primeval sanctity of the spots they belong to: the mountain, the grove, and the individual tree, the rocky gorge, the rock, the grassy knoll, each was once an object of

[1] *History of Religions*, i, p. 77. [2] *Elements of Folk Psychology*, p. 284.

reverence. Britain is full of sacred wells, which once received prayers and offerings.'[1] So it was in ancient Greece.

'Any one who really wishes to understand the religion of antiquity,' it has been said, 'should have before him a clear and living picture of the antique landscape, as it is represented, for instance, in certain Hellenistic reliefs and Pompeian frescoes. It is saturated with religion in a manner quite foreign to us. One could hardly have taken a step out of doors without meeting a little temple, a secret enclosure, an image, a cult-pillar, a sacred tree. Nymphs lived in every cave and fountain. These pictures completely answer to the description which the geographer Strabo gives of the lowlands at the mouth of the Alpheus: "The whole tract is full of shrines of Artemis, Aphrodite and nymphs in flowery groves due to the abundance of water; there are numerous hermae on the roads and shrines of Poseidon on the headlands by the sea." '[2]

These local cults, found everywhere throughout Southern Europe, outlasted the worship of the greater gods of the old religion. The village folk, as we know, the 'pagans', clung to their old religious customs long after the town-dwellers had, most of them, made terms with the new faith. They were the last to be converted to Christianity; indeed they can hardly be said to have been converted at all, for the Church incorporated their old festivals and observances in its own ritual after subjecting them to Christian baptism in the name of the Virgin or one of the saints.

As regards nature-worship in the larger sense, we are apt, perhaps, to read too much of our own feelings into the motives of the primitive worshipper, to picture him as falling down in adoration, prompted solely by the beauty and the majesty of the spectacle perpetually unrolling itself before him. Since we are dealing with our own human ancestors, we need not suppose that the aesthetic emotions were entirely inoperative; but we must remem-

[1] *History of Religion*, pp. 29–30.

[2] Nilsson, *History of Greek Religion*, pp. 118–19.

ber that, throughout the history of religion, worship is prompted by human needs. It is the expression of a desire to put oneself in relation with higher powers and to bespeak their aid. And at an early stage it is man's every-day physical needs that fill his horizon. We still pray 'Give us this day our daily bread'; but to primitive man the precariousness of his daily bread was a thought even more constantly present. He turned therefore to supplicate the great natural agencies which have been mentioned, as the powers on which his food and his well-being most obviously depend. 'The farther we go back in civilization', says Professor Menzies, 'the less protection has man against the weather, the more do his subsistence and his comfort depend on the action of the sun, the winds, the rain.'[1] The sun and the rain make his food grow, but the sun can also burn up his plants. The thunderstorm may do damage, but it often puts an end to a long drought. The winds similarly may be agents of destruction, but they also dry the wet earth or, on the other hand, bring up the clouds and the needed rain. Conceiving these agencies therefore as living beings like himself, primitive man approaches them with prayers and offerings, beseeching their friendly interest in his undertakings.

It is in fact through agriculture that man is brought into that close and continuous relation to nature and its processes which naturally awakes in him a sense of dependence on a Power greater than himself. I have already quoted in an earlier chapter some sentences of Dr. Malinowski pointing to food as the central fact in primitive life, in connexion with which the savage forms his first vague idea of Providence as an encompassing and, on the whole, beneficent Power, on which his well-being depends. Dr. Malinowski's suggestion, as I understand him, is that anticipations of this religious attitude may be detected even at an earlier stage of society. But if not thereby first

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 27.

awakened, the feeling of dependence was at all events so intensified, by man's adoption of the agricultural life, that it seems then for the first time to express itself in acts of conscious worship; and it is in this connexion that the origin of the nature-gods becomes intelligible to us. Thus, if we turn to Egypt and Babylonia, the earliest civilizations of which we have a record, we find that the early religion of Egypt rests on the two great facts of the sun and the Nile, on whose combined action the fertility of the land depends. Worship is paid to the Sun-god as the source of life and increase, while Osiris is similarly addressed in the oldest texts as the Nile, whose yearly inundation brings new life and fertility to the soil. In the Euphrates valley the conditions of human well-being are the same, and the original gods of the Babylonian pantheon are in like manner the sun-god and the storm-god that brings the rains; or a further discrimination gives us a triad, representing the beneficent power of the sun, the power of vegetation and fertility residing in the earth itself, and the power that manifests itself in storms and rain. So, in Greece too, Zeus was originally the weather-god, the giver of rain, and therefore the god of fruitfulness. And in Greece as in Babylon rain is associated with the storm-cloud and the thunder which heralded its coming, and Zeus has his epithets accordingly.

'Every traveller in Greece will have noticed,' writes Prof. Nilsson, 'how the clouds gather swiftly round the highest mountain-top in the neighbourhood. In a short time the sky is covered with clouds, the roar of the thunder is heard, and the rain pours down. Up there upon the mountain-top dwells the cloud-gatherer and the flinger of the thunder-bolt, who sends rain and therefore also grants fertility. Every such hill-top and every town has its Zeus, but notwithstanding this fact it is felt that it is the same Zeus who everywhere gathers the clouds, hurls the lightning and sends the rain. The atmospheric phenomena cannot be localized.' [1]

[1] *History of Greek Religion*, p. 113.

And with Zeus as the giver of fertility is closely associated Demeter, the corn-mother, the goddess of agriculture, who personified the vegetative life of the fields themselves. Hesiod instructs the farmer, when he sets his hand to the plough, to pray to Zeus Chthonios and the holy Demeter that the ears of Demeter's corn may be heavy and ripe.[1]

The Baal worship of which we hear so much in the Old Testament gives us, perhaps, the clearest idea of this agricultural nature-cult as the immemorial practice of the Semites throughout Syria and Palestine. It was the original religion of the Semitic race. Baal in this connexion is a generic term signifying 'lord' or owner of some place or district; and each of the local Baalim was distinguished by adding the name of the place or district over which he presided,—the Baal of Tyre, of Lebanon, of Mount Peor, and so forth. All through Syria and Palestine the native inhabitants worshipped with agricultural rites the local 'Baal' or lord, as the giver of fertility to that particular district or cultivated area. 'The original idea of Baal's land', says Robertson Smith, 'appears to have been spots of natural fertility beside springs and river-banks, in the groves and tangled thickets and green tree-shaded glades of mountains and deep water courses.' Such favoured spots seem to be planted and watered by the hand of the gods. In a country where agriculture depends on irrigation this primitive idea is easily extended to the adjacent cultivated land and to cultivated land in general; and

'ultimately all agricultural produce was regarded as the gift of the Baalim, and all the worshippers who frequented a particular sanctuary brought a tribute of first-fruits to the local god, whether their crops grew on land naturally moist and fertile, or on land laboriously irrigated, or on fields watered by the rains of heaven. . . . Finally, the life-giving power of the god was not limited to vegeta-

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 122.

tion; to him was ascribed also the increase of animal life, the multiplication of flocks and herds as well as of the human inhabitants of the land. For the increase of animate nature is obviously conditioned, in the last resort, by the fertility of the soil. . . . Thus where the growth of vegetation is ascribed to a particular power, the same power receives the thanks and homage of his worshippers for the increase of cattle and of man. Firstlings as well as first-fruits were offered at the shrines of the Baalim.' [1]

Speaking roughly, every township, every considerable district at all events, had its simple altar in the open air (at first only a pile of rough stones, with an upright stone or pillar beside it, indicating the local presence of the god) at which the inhabitants gathered to celebrate the various rites of the agricultural year.

In these nature-gods man thus embodies his earliest conception of a beneficent providence with which he seeks to establish permanent friendly relations by regular offerings, in token at once of his gratitude for the past and his hope of a continuance of similar goodness in the future. It is an important step forward, incongruous as it seems to us, to personify these elemental forces and represent them in bodily form. Some of the resultant deities had an exalted future before them. The sun in particular, as the most glorious object in nature, easily gathers round it sentiments of religious adoration. In Egypt the solar disc became the symbol of Ikhnaton's monotheistic faith, and in the old religion of Persia it held a similar place. But in other instances, where the cult is intended as a glorification of the productive forces of nature, it usually smacks too strongly of the soil and of the physical facts of sex to be easily incorporated in a religion of a higher type. Especially where the principle of fertility is worshipped as a goddess—Ishtar, Astarte, Aphrodite, or Cybele—we find the cult disfigured by grossly sensual features. The ubiquity of the phallus as a religious emblem, the religious

[1] *Religion of the Semites*, pp. 102–7.

prostitution practised at so many shrines, and the orgiastic rites of the Phrygian goddess, sufficiently indicate what is meant. It is just on account of the non-moral character of natural agencies that the transformation of a natural religion into an ethical is so difficult to accomplish. Stories are told of the gods at the former level, and actions attributed to them, which may have an intelligible and inoffensive meaning so long as they are no more than personifications of natural phenomena, but which are wholly inconsistent with their later character as patrons of morality or ideals of human excellence. Probably the transformation is never achieved with complete success where the nature-gods and their mythology have had time to take root. Nevertheless the transition in question marks the crucial step in the religious advance of mankind, and every progressive race must make the attempt. The history of Greek religion is an extraordinarily interesting record of such a process of transformation.

CHAPTER VI

THE RELIGION OF GREECE: THE HUMANIZING OF THE GODS

The lines of Xenophanes are often sympathetically quoted: 'Mortals think that the gods are begotten, and wear clothes like their own, and have a voice and form. If oxen or horses or lions had hands, and could draw with them and make works of art as men do, horses would draw the shapes of gods like horses, oxen like oxen, each kind would represent their bodies just like their own forms.' The sympathy is not misplaced, for they are the first protest of awakening philosophy against the anthropomorphism of the popular creed. Yet historically Xenophanes was in error. As a matter of historical fact, man began by finding the divine in objects farthest removed from humanity; he worshipped stones and trees and beasts before he made gods in his own image. The mystery of the non-human, especially when associated with the idea of incalculable power, seems to have been the chief impelling motive in these cults which seem to us at first so unaccountable. This applies especially to the worship of gods in animal shape, of whose prevalence in Greece before the advent of the Olympians we have abundant evidence. The bull of Minos was the central figure in the Aegean religion which the recent excavations in Crete have revealed to us. It was the enormous strength and rage of the wild bull which led to his selection as an object of worship—not in Greece alone, for Yahweh was worshipped in the form of a bull at the shrines of Dan and Bethel, and the place of the bull Apis in Egyptian religion is well known. The mention of Egypt is sufficient to recall the number and variety of the animals to which man has paid divine honours—the dog, the cat, the goat, the wolf, the jackal, the hawk, the frog, and the serpent, to mention only a few. In the earliest Egyptian records the gods are always repre-

sented by the animals in question, but at a later period mixed figures succeed, half human half animal—human figures with the head of a hawk or a ram or a dog. A further step is taken when, in Babylon, the god is represented sometimes standing on the back of the animal, with which he was originally identified.

Herodotus mentions as one of the significant distinctions between the Greeks and barbarians, that the latter worship animals while the deities of the Greeks are all human. But the animal companions or 'emblems', as they are sometimes called, of the different gods—the owl of Athena, the cow of Hera—represent the last stage in a similar process of transformation. The same may be said of the standing epithets which we find attached to a particular god or goddess, as in the two cases mentioned—ox-eyed Hera, owl-eyed Athena. The epithets do not convey these associations to Homer, or to a modern reader; they seem simply to describe the gleaming eyes of the one goddess, and the bovine melting softness of the other. Nevertheless the anthropological interpretation is doubtless correct. Additional evidence is frequently supplied by the adventures ascribed to the gods, and the animal disguises which they assume in the mythological stories told of them. One of the oldest titles of Apollo is Lukeios, and in many legends,—even occasionally in ritual—the wolf appears as his sacred animal. Artemis was worshipped as a bear at a very early period, and a horse-headed Demeter is recorded at Thigaleia. The plastic figures of Greek polytheism, so familiar to us in literature and in art, have thus a history behind them. Theriomorphism seems, in fact, as a rule to precede anthropomorphism, and it is only gradually that the gods are humanized. Polytheistic religions are many of them at what has been called the therianthropic or transition stage, where the line between man and beast is not yet clearly drawn. Man has not yet awakened to full self-consciousness, and therefore it seems

to him no degradation to represent the gods in animal form; it serves rather to differentiate them from mankind. As Tiele says, 'a primitive mysticism half unconsciously strove, by these mysterious features borrowed from animal life, to express the superhuman power of the deity.' [1]

But it was precisely the distinction of Greek religion that it rose above this cloudy mysticism. If the gods worshipped are enigmatical and non-human, we are never far removed from the monstrous, the irrational and the cruel. With his intelligence but half awake, man abases himself before incalculable powers and is ready to propitiate them with bloody rites. But the message of the prophet of old was, 'Son of man, stand upon thy feet and I will speak with thee.' The Greek mind responded early to this challenge, and Herodotus was right after all in making the humanity of their gods a significant distinction between the Hellenes and the barbarians. The intelligence of the Greeks, to which we owe the very idea of scientific knowledge, was the natural foe of the irrational and the obscure. Awaking to the full consciousness of the power of reason, they could not but awake also to the exceptional position and dignity of man as the possessor of reason. In this, and in whatever human qualities can be shown to flow from it, lies his kinship with the gods. The divine, in short, must be sought no longer in the infra-human but on the analogy of the distinctively human. Superhuman, no doubt, the gods must be, but their superhumanity will be recognized not by assimilating them to the lower animals, or to purely natural forces, but by ascribing to them a realized perfection along the lines of what we deem the highest human excellence. And so we get the Olympian gods as idealized human beings. How important such a step may be in religious progress I have already partly indicated, and it may approve itself to us as such in the sequel. 'This rise of man above nature', says Caird, 'was the essential change

[1] *Science of Religion*, i, p. 102.

by which the Greek genius broke away from the original Aryan stock and entered upon its separate course of development.' And it is perhaps not fanciful to find a consciousness of this change on the part of the Greeks themselves reflected in their mythology in the legends about the conquest of an earlier and ruder race of gods by Zeus and the Olympians. As Caird puts it,

'The idea of humanity—meaning by humanity the peculiar powers of intelligence and will by which man is distinguished from the animals—as victorious over nature, i.e. over brute force guided only by instinct and passion, is a central thought which reproduces itself in almost every Greek myth: in the war of the Olympians with the Titans, in the slaying of the Python by Apollo, in the hunting of Artemis, in the labours of Heracles. In many of these myths, indeed, we may detect an original naturalistic meaning, a solar or elemental significance; but this, even in the earliest poetry of Greece, has fallen altogether into the background or received a new interpretation.' [1]

It may sound parodoxical to talk in this lofty idealistic fashion of Zeus and the other Olympians, when we recall some of the stories told of them by Homer, or the still more gross and savage legends to be found in Hesiod. 'Homer and Hesiod', said Xenophanes in the sixth century B.C., 'have ascribed to the gods all things that among men are a shame and a reproach—theft and adultery and deceiving one another.' And we know how Plato, at a later date, in sketching his ideal commonwealth, proposed to exclude the poets from any part in the education of the young just because of these immoral stories and the otherwise unworthy light in which they represent the divine nature. How then, it may be asked, can we consistently speak of the worship of these all-too-human deities as marking an important step in moral and religious progress? To this it may be replied that advance must be estimated, not by the immediate result, but by the possibilities opened

[1] *Evolution of Religion*, i, pp. 265–6.

up of further attainment. The humanizing of the gods meant shutting the door upon the irrational and the infra-human: it meant that the character and actions of the gods must *at least* be up to human standards. If, at the outset, the gods of Homer, in their virtues and vices, are in the main a glorified reflection of the accepted code of the age and society which the poems represent, that is only what we have to expect. The character of his gods is the index of man's own advance to a purer morality and a higher civilization generally; and the very criticisms we have quoted are evidence that, in Greece itself at a comparatively early age, a more ideal conception of the divine was already replacing the easy-going Homeric code. The gods must represent not simply man as he is at his everyday level, but the highest and the best that he can conceive in human form.

Moreover, we have to remember that many of the morally offensive legends in the Greek mythology were originally nature-myths; not stories about quasi-human beings at all, but a primitive poetic version of natural processes and elemental conflicts. They would never have been invented about the anthropomorphic gods, as such; they cling to the deities in question as an inheritance from their naturalistic past. And although these legends figure largely in dictionaries of mythology and such like compilations, and the sceptical critics of the traditional religion made great play with them, we may readily believe that many of them were unknown to the ordinary Greek worshipper, and that those which still floated in the public memory—and which he could therefore have narrated if questioned—were not present to his mind in the act of worship, and did not in fact enter at all into his religious attitude toward the god. We have continually to be reminded that in Greece, as in the ancient world generally, belief in the mythology was never *de fide*—obligatory, that is to say, on the worshipper: obligation had only to do

with the due performance of the ritual. The Homeric poems are often spoken of as the Bible of the Greeks—as constituting, in other words, the source of their theology. But it is just this fact—that Greek theology goes back, not to a prophet or lawgiver but to a poet—that accentuates the difference between Greek religion and religions of the Book, like Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, or any other religion founded on authority. For no one will suggest that the author of the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* comes forward as a religious teacher and contemplates it as the primary purpose of the poem to formulate the articles of orthodox belief. Obviously the religion comes in incidentally as part of the epic picture of life; and this being so, the theology is no more authoritative for future generations than the political and social institutions of the heroic age were of binding force upon republican Greece. As the Homeric age receded into the past, it was inevitable, therefore, that Homeric stories about the gods, and even the general attitude of the poet towards them, should live on as poetry but cease to be taken seriously as literal fact or doctrinal truth. Greek religion was thus set free to develop on the lines I have suggested. For what Greek religion meant to its sincere votaries, or what it could come to mean for the best minds, we must gather from the testimony of a later age. Let us try to trace some of the features of that development.

From the beginning the high gods of Greek polytheism were conceived as an organized society. The gods of Olympus are connected with one another by ties of blood: the society is organized on the lines of the patriarchal family with Zeus as ruling head, according to his recurring title, Zeus 'the father of gods and men'. Or it has also been compared to a monarchical constitution. 'The Olympian state,' says Professor Moore, 'like the Mycenean kingdoms which doubtless served as models for it, is a monarchy, with a factious aristocracy who often try to circumvent

the sovereign and carry through their designs without his consent, but, when he chooses to assert himself, are powerless to escape his knowledge or resist his will.'[1] Zeus is not conceived for a moment as, in any sense, author or creator of the universe; on the contrary, as we have seen, the Olympians succeeded to their sovereignty at a comparatively late date. Although they are deathless, their birth and genealogy is known; they have older gods and dark powers of nature behind them. Such speculations as the Greeks indulged in about the origin of the world and the present order of things are to be found in the rude nature-myths, which we meet all the world over, and which Hesiod sought to systematize in his *Theogony*. 'Surely first of all Chaos came into being . . . and of Chaos were born Erebus and dark Night, and of Night the bright Sky and Day were brought to birth,' and from the marriage of Earth and Heaven all the rest proceeded. There is nothing more till we come to the scientific guesses of the Ionian philosophers in the sixth century as to the primeval element or elements and the process of differentiation by which the present order of things was evolved. But, although they have nothing to do with the origin of the world, the rule of the Olympians is represented as order and law supervening upon disorder and lawless violence; it is a system of legitimate or constitutional rule, in which each god has allotted to him a distinct province of nature, a sphere of activity in which he alone has rightful authority. First of all there is the triple division of the heavens, the sea, and the underworld, to the three brothers, Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades respectively, and then the various functions or departments of activity assigned to the younger gods. Moira, Fate, or Destiny, the impersonal power to which even the gods must yield, appears in the first instance to stand for this idea of just appointment, delimitation of

[1] *History of Religions*, i, p. 430.

provinces and powers, the principle, as we might say, of cosmic order or justice on which the world is based. Etymologically the word is connected with Meros, a part, and may be taken as meaning share or lot, or, in the largest sense, the apportionment (to gods and men and things in general) of their proper place and destiny.[1] Heracleitus presents the same idea of a fixed order of the world which cannot be transgressed with impunity when he says, 'If the Sun should overstep his limits, the Erinyes, the ministers of justice, would find him out.' And we know that the typical Greek conception of sin was the overstepping of limits—*hybris*, as they called it—the insolence and pride which most surely calls down the vengeance of the gods, because it overrides the rights of others and would even set at naught the deep distinction between gods and men. Zeus himself in the *Iliad* (xvi. 431) would fain save his dear son Sarpedon from impending death at the hands of Patroclus; but he recognizes that to make an exception in one case from the universal law of human mortality would be to confuse the order of the world, and he sorrowfully yields to destiny and lets events take their course.

Such is the Homeric picture of the gods. It is frankly polytheistic, and the figures and personalities of the individual gods are as full of detail and as clearly distinguishable from one another as those of the Greek and Trojan heroes with whom they mingle. Two points, however, are left vague—the sovereignty of Zeus in relation to the other gods and the relation of Zeus and the gods in general to Moira or Destiny. On these points the statements in Homer are not always reconcilable. Zeus, as the eldest-born, enjoys a certain over-lordship; yet he begins as a departmental god, in relation to whom the others have their independent spheres of action, and they do not hesitate to oppose their wills to his and to plot against

[1] Cf. Cornford, *From Religion to Philosophy*, pp. 17–21.

him. He is, we might say, like Agamemnon, 'King of men' in the Greek host, elevated to the chief command, but by no means the sole directing will, rather like a president of the council, *primus inter pares*. He can be outwitted, and he has to attend to one thing at a time. He 'turns his shining eyes to the land of the Thracian horse-breeders', thinking that all is going smoothly at Troy; and while his attention is thus diverted, Poseidon seizes the occasion to stir up the Greeks to fresh exertions. But Zeus is always in a position to retrieve these lapses; and the drift of other passages is towards the acknowledgement of his real supremacy. So, for example, in the famous passage (Bk. VIII. 18–27) where Zeus lays his commands upon all the gods and goddesses and threatens them with dire penalties should they attempt to thwart his will: 'Go to now, ye gods, make trial that ye all may know. Fasten a rope from heaven, and all ye gods lay hold thereof and all goddesses; yet could ye not drag from heaven to earth Zeus, Counsellor supreme, not though ye toiled sore. But once I likewise were minded to draw with all my heart, then should I draw you up and earth and sea withal. Then would I bind the rope about a pinnacle of Olympus, and so should all those things be hung in air. By so much am I beyond gods and beyond men.' The general tendency of the poems, especially if we take the *Odyssey* also into account, is to accord to Zeus the unique position here claimed; and that is more and more the direction taken by religious thought in Greece in the centuries that follow. And, just in proportion as Zeus is recognized as the supreme Ruler and Disposer of events, religious belief tends to become practically monotheistic, although the external framework of polytheism remains.

This process implies a similar change in the conception of the relation of the gods to Destiny or cosmic law, the second question to which Homer gives an indefinite answer. On the whole, the poet seems to think of Moira

or Aisa as an impersonal and therefore inexorable Power, to which gods and men must alike bow. Zeus is represented as consulting the will of Destiny with his scales, and as obliged to carry out the answer received, however much it may run counter to his own inclination. Yet, on the other hand, the poet seems at the outset of the poem to describe the whole sequel of events as the working out of 'the counsel of Zeus' (*Διὸς βουλή*); and from time to time we meet such expressions as *Διὸς αἶσα*, *θεοῦ μοῖρα*, the fate of Zeus, the destiny of God. It may very well be, as Mr. Cornford suggests, that in the last-mentioned phrases the 'of Zeus' or 'of God' 'is at first hardly more than a pious addition' that slipped in half unawares. But the phrases indicate none the less truly the direction men's thoughts were taking. The more the figure of the god grows in power and majesty, in mental and moral dignity, the more incongruous it becomes to think of him as subject to constraint by an external power. The decrees of destiny (*μόρσιμα*) which we find even Pindar still saying 'Zeus dares not reverse',[1] come to be thought of increasingly as the will and ordinance of Zeus himself. Moira, 'which was originally an ultimate fact in the constitution of Nature,' now appears as a law enacted by the personal will of the supreme God, and the course of the world's history becomes the working out of his 'counsel' or purpose.

'For religion,' as Mr. Cornford does not fail to point out, 'this result is of great importance. Destiny or necessity had at first been a negative, impersonal thing, confronting all power and desire with limits that must be accepted because they could not be broken. But when Destiny is absorbed into a personal will, it becomes positive—a direction and government of the world's affairs; and

[1] *P.* 12. 30. Pindar, like Homer, still hovers between the two conceptions; he speaks elsewhere *N.* 4. 61 of *τὸ μόρσιμον Διόθεν πεπρωμένον*. A similar transition of thought takes place in the Vedic theology. The world-order, Rita, at first supreme over the gods, comes to be represented as the ordinance of Varuna and the Adityas. (Cf. Cornford's note, *Op. cit.*, p. 26.)

this direction is sure to be regarded as foreseeing and benevolent. Henceforth it is possible for man to fall into the attitude of faith. He can trust this government, however hard it may be in detail to justify its ways.' [1]

This line of advance leads naturally towards monotheism, and as a matter of fact in the lyric and elegiac poets of the centuries that immediately follow we find the figure of Zeus dwarfing and obscuring all the other divine personalities. The all-controlling sway of Zeus is nowhere more strongly emphasized than in Aeschylus. He is addressed as 'the King of Kings, most blessed among the blessed, of perfect power most perfect'[2], the all-seeing, all powerful father, the cause and accomplisher of all things, without whose will nothing either good or evil happens to men.

> Though the deep will of Zeus be hard to track,
> Yet doth it flame and glance,
> A beacon in the dark, 'mid clouds of chance
> That wrap mankind . . .
> Smitten by him, from towering hopes degraded,
> Mortals lie low and still:
> Tireless and effortless, works forth its will
> The arm divine!
> God from his holy seat, in calm of unarmed power,
> Brings forth the deed at its appointed hour.[3]

And in the *Agamemnon* it is on Zeus that the chorus call in their distress:

> To Zeus whoe'er he be . . .
> No power I know
> Save only Zeus, if I aside would throw
> . . . this burden of distress.

It is not upon the Zeus of Homer that the chorus call, Zeus the cloud-gatherer, the thunderer. The gods have

[1] *Greek Religious Thought*, p. xvii.

[2] *Suppl.* 524–6. J. Adam, *Religious Teachers of Greece*, pp. 142 ff. gives further examples.

[3] *Suppliants*, 86 ff. (Morshead's translation).

dropt the epithets that betray their origin as nature-powers, and they have been lifted above those human passions and frailties which Pindar declares it is blasphemous to attribute to the Divine. They have become, in a word, ethical powers, powers making for righteousness and for every kind of human excellence. For Aeschylus, Zeus is the upholder of the moral order of the world: Justice, as he says poetically, is the daughter of Zeus, and, as hinted in one of the quotations just made, the divine justice is seen pre-eminently in the punishment of sin. This is the recurring theme of his sombre tragedies.

When the nature and functions of the gods are so conceived, there is no opening left for strife among the immortals; they appear as organs of a common purpose. In a sense they might all be described as ministers of the will of Zeus, and we might expect them therefore to be definitely so treated, losing their independent godhead, or even being merged in his personality; as was the case in India, where the old Vedic gods, Indra, Agni, Varuna and the rest came to be treated as so many different manifestations of Brahma, the supreme and only Reality. But this result in India may be said to be due to philosophical reflection rather than to the promptings of religious need. A similar consummation was reached in Greece also, when the Stoic philosophers identified Zeus with the metaphysical ground of the universe and allegorized the old myths accordingly. Here again the conclusion was prompted by a philosophical rather than by a religious need. It is not till the word God becomes synonymous with the Creator, or (in the larger phrase of Euripides) the 'deep base of the world'[1], that the imperative need for unity arises; and the Olympian deities, as we have seen, claim no such position. The polytheistic worshipper is, on the whole, not troubled by the question of the unity of the divine; for there is a kind of implicit

[1] *Trojan Women*, 884.

monotheism in the very act and attitude of worship. Worship is paid to one god at a time, and circumstances determine on each occasion the god to whom worship is due. The mind of the worshipper is naturally concentrated upon the deity in question, who represents to him the presence of the divine in that place, or the power whom he thanks for aid and protection at some important crisis of his life. He is not distracted by any thought of the other gods of his pantheon. The time will come when, in appropriate circumstances, he will bow as devoutly before one or other of them; but for the moment they are simply not present to his mind.

The word henotheism has been coined to designate the sense of the divine unity which may be practically present in spite of a polytheistic creed. It was originally employed by Max Müller to describe the attitude of the Vedic poets, who habitually speak of the god whom they are immediately addressing as supreme, and heap upon him the highest attributes, without any thought of denying the divinity of other gods. But the term may be given the wider application which I have indicated: the god immediately worshipped may be for the time the one God, even although the worshipper does not address him in superlatives. So it was that the Greeks of the classical period, who use the terms 'the gods', 'God', and 'the divine' (οἱ θεοί, ὁ θεός, τὸ θεῖον) almost indiscriminately, felt no obligation to renounce the worship of the individual deities, hallowed by long tradition. And it must be acknowledged that the religion gained in beauty and variety by the maintenance of these cults. What would Greek religion be without the noble figure of Apollo, god of light and poetry, of truth and self-control, or that of Athena Parthenos, the ideal of knowledge and disciplined strength, the virgin of the Acropolis—to mention only these two, who with Zeus are sometimes spoken of as an inner trinity among the Olympians? The world certainly

would have been the poorer without those masterpieces of fifth-century art which realized in bodily form the highest conceptions of the poets and gave to this religion its final consecration. 'The works of Greek art', says Dr. Farnell, 'have this value for us among others that, even more than the poetical literature, they reveal to us how the people at their best imagined their deities. But they also helped the people to imagine them better and more nobly.'[1] Of the Olympian Zeus of Phidias, Quintilian wrote, 'The majesty of the Zeus so rises to the level of its subject that its beauty may be thought to have added something to the traditional religion.'[2] Wrought in gold and ivory, this statue impressed later centuries as the supreme embodiment of divine beauty, benignity, and calm. 'Having once seen it', says Dio Chrysostom, 'one could not imagine him otherwise'[3]; and Livy tells us[4] how Aemilius Paulus, the Roman general, when he visited the temple in Elis 'was moved in spirit, seeming to see the very God before him' (Jovem velut presentem intuens motus animo est). 'His power and kingship', says Dio Chrysostom, 'are displayed by the strength and majesty of the whole image, his fatherly care for men by the mildness and loving-kindness in his face: the solemn austerity of the work marks the God of the city and the law'. 'He who is heavy laden in soul', he says elsewhere, 'who has experienced many misfortunes and sorrows in his life, and from whom sweet sleep has fled, even he, I think, if he stood before this image, would forget all the calamities and troubles that befall in human life.'

[1] *Outline-History of Greek Religion*, p. 99.
[2] *Inst. Orat.* xii. 10. 9. [3] Or. 53. p. 401. [4] xlv. 28.

CHAPTER VII

THE CONTRIBUTION OF GREEK PHILOSOPHY

We have seen in the preceding chapter how ethical reflection, fusing the idea of Fate with the will of Zeus, calls forth from the poets their impressive statements of the moral government of the world. We shall find, although it takes a wider survey, that ethical considerations are equally central in the philosophical argument.

Greek philosophy began in Ionia in a purely scientific and secular spirit; an account of its inquiries and theories reads like a chapter in the history of physical science rather than of philosophy, as we now understand that term. It seemed at first to have no point of contact with religion or theology. Nevertheless, as these scientific guesses came to be bruited abroad in even wider circles, they were felt by old-fashioned people to have a distinctly unsettling tendency. It was all very well for Anaximander to call his innumerable worlds 'gods', or for Anaximenes to speak of Air as a 'god' (air being for him the primeval element from which everything else is derived). But, as Professor Burnet says,[1] 'these were never the gods of any city and were never worshipped by any one, and they did not, therefore, answer at all to what the ordinary Greek meant by a god'. These new-fangled substances and forces and whirling motions from which the philosophers professed to deduce the whole orderly system of the world seemed to leave no place at all for the old-time deities. To the plain man it was in plain words atheism, and it was a charge of atheism that forced Anaxagoras to flee from Athens in spite of the powerful protection of Pericles. Aristophanes, in the *Clouds*, represents the sentiments of the ordinary citizen quite fairly when he brings Socrates on the stage swearing by 'Chaos, Respiration, and Air' and makes Strepsiades sum up the instruction he has received in

[1] In his essay contributed to the volume, *The Legacy of Greece*, p. 63.

the words, 'Vortex has driven out Zeus and reigns in his stead'.

Many causes besides the first stirrings of physical science combined in fifth-century Athens to unsettle men's minds. The second half of that century saw philosophy take another shape—the Sophistic criticism of accepted knowledge and morality. Such criticism is seen to be necessary and salutary, when we look back upon it as a stage in the general advance of mind; but its results in the first instance are usually negative and even demoralizing. Under the Sophistic criticism knowledge seemed to dissolve into a chaos of individual opinion. What seems true to each man is true for him; there is no objective standard. Similarly, in the realm of practice, according to the Sophistic teaching, the moral law is not rooted in *nature* but only in the *custom* of the country—'what seems good' to the 'individual state'. It is, therefore, merely a convention, which may vary from city to city, and has no binding authority for the man who has emancipated himself from popular prejudices and is strong enough to set it at defiance. Hence the subversive moral theories which we find Plato refuting in the *Republic*, the *Gorgias*, and other dialogues—variations of the general thesis that 'might is right'. So Callicles, in the *Gorgias*, holds up the 'tyrant', the usurper, the man who unscrupulously seizes upon power and uses it ruthlessly for his own advantage, 'trampling under foot all our formulas and all our laws', as the man in whom the light of natural justice shines forth.[1] The argument is perhaps most skilfully and plausibly presented by Adeimantus in the Second Book of the *Republic*, where he argues at length that all the praise which moralists and educators lavish upon Justice (by which term in Plato we have to understand right-doing in the largest sense, Righteousness in the Hebrew usage) is really bestowed 'not upon justice in itself, but upon the respecta-

[1] *Gorgias*, 484.

bility which it gives' and all the good things which a reputation for justice brings a man either in this world or the next. The poets tell us of no end of good things which the gods give to the pious: 'their oak trees have acorns at the top and bees in the middle, and their sheep's fleeces are heavy with wool', or 'they are to have children's children and leave a posterity behind them'. The sinners and unrighteous men, on the other hand, they plunge into a 'swamp in Hades, and set them to carry water in a sieve'. At the same time they constantly tell us that 'self-control and justice, admirable as they are, are difficult and troublesome, whereas vice and injustice are pleasant and very easily to be had'. In these circumstances what other conclusion is a quick-witted young man likely to draw than that he has nothing to gain but trouble or loss from *being* just, whereas if he is unjust but provides himself with a reputation for justice he may have a marvellous good time? Clearly the outward semblance is what he will choose. 'Of all those who profess to sing the praises of justice', Adeimantus concludes, 'no one has denounced injustice or praised justice apart from the reputation, honours and rewards they bring; but what effect either of them in itself has upon its possessor when it dwells in his soul, unseen of gods or man, no one has ever yet explained, either in prose or verse. No one has proved that a soul can harbour no worse evil than injustice, no greater good than justice. Had all of you said that from the first and tried to convince us from our youth up, we should not be keeping watch upon our neighbours to prevent them from doing wrong to us, but everyone would keep a far more effective watch over himself, for fear lest, by wronging others, he should open his doors to the worst of evils.'

It is easy to see that in this carefully constructed speech Plato is setting the stage for the triumphal entry of his own doctrine; for what he says 'no one has ever yet explained in prose or verse' is precisely the central text of

the Platonic ethics, the disinterestedness and self-sufficiency of the good life. Virtue, he constantly tells us, is 'the health of the soul', 'the right constitution' or ordered harmony of our being. It is, in short, the realization by man of his true nature, and only in realizing its own nature can any being achieve happiness. To inquire, therefore, whether virtue is 'expedient', whether goodness is 'profitable', is to perpetrate an abuse of terms. As well ask, Plato says, whether it is better to be sick or to be well, whether it is better to subject the human and divine element in our nature to the animal or the animal to the divine.

Hence the reward which the good man looks for is nothing extrinsic, to be conferred upon him for his goodness, but only 'to become like God as far as men may, and to become like him is to become holy and wise and just'. And, as goodness is its own reward, so the evil life carries its own penalty with it. The choice is between 'the two patterns eternally set before men', 'the one blessed and divine, the other godless and wretched; and men do not see, in their utter folly and infatuation, that they are growing like the one and unlike the other by reason of their evil deeds. And the penalty is that they lead a life according to the pattern which they resemble.'[1] Thus the only true prayer is that at the close of the *Phaedrus:* 'Grant me to be beautiful in the inner man.' The supreme values, in Plato's view, exist in their own unchallengeable right. Like Beauty or like Truth, the ethically Good is desirable for its own sake. Eternal objects of desire all three, they neither admit of proof nor do they require defence. They all shine by their own light.

I have dwelt so long on Plato's ethical doctrine because it leads us to the very heart of religion, not only of Plato's religion but of all religion.

'Goodness, beauty, and truth,' said Bradley at the conclusion of his last volume,[2] 'are all there is which in the end is real. Their

[1] *Theaetetus*, 176. [2] *Essays on Truth and Reality*, p. 469.

reality, appearing amid chance and change, is beyond these and is eternal. But in whatever world they appear, that world so far is real. . . . "For love and beauty and delight," it is no matter where they have shown themselves, "there is no death nor change"; and this conclusion is true. These things do not die, since the Paradise in which they bloom is immortal. That Paradise is no special region nor any given particular spot in time and space. It is here, it is everywhere where any finite being is lifted into that higher life which alone is waking reality.'

The language is the language of Plato; the sentences might almost have been written by Plato himself as they stand, and yet they sound to us quite natural and as true as they are beautiful.

The Greeks of Plato's time were perhaps better placed than we are for realizing the self-evidencing character of the Good, owing to the analogy of Beauty which was constantly suggested by the language they used: τὸ καλόν, the beautiful, the fair, the noble, and τὸ ἀγαθόν, the good, are constantly coupled with one another, and are used almost interchangeably. There is no temptation to explain away the direct and triumphant appeal of Beauty, its self-justifying, absolute value. But the appeal of goodness is as direct and as irresistible. Hypocrisy, it has been said, is the homage which vice pays to virtue; and the beauty of goodness does indeed command the homage even of the most abandoned. So, with a fine dramatic touch, in *The Ring and the Book*, when Guido, the utter villain, is being led away to execution, Browning makes him call in his extremity of terror, and as his last resort, on the pure spirit of his murdered wife as the one from whom, if from any, forgiveness and help might come:

> Abbate, Cardinal, Christ, Maria, God,
> Pompilia! Will you let them murder me?

acknowledging in that great climax all the loveliness of the goodness which he had hated and slandered while she lived.[1]

[1] As a contrast take Flaubert's terrible expression of his habit of mind:

Plato's ethical doctine forms, as I have said, the natural avenue of approach to his view of the divine nature. As Mr. Cornford has well said, 'the whole philosophy of the main Socratic school—Socrates, Plato, Aristotle—may be seen as a grand attempt to base the laws of human conduct upon the laws of the universe.[1] We have already noted Plato's rejection of the mythological stories of the poets as slanders upon the divine goodness. 'God is really good and is to be so represented: he is a Being of perfect simplicity and truth, both in deed and in word: he neither changes in himself nor imposes upon others either by dream or waking vision, by sign or word'.[2] And it is the worst of all impieties to teach or to believe that the gods are accessible to bribes, that they may be prevailed upon by sacrifices and adulation to turn aside the course of justice. The gods cannot accept the gifts of the wicked. The only worship acceptable to the gods is that of those who are their 'followers'—who are themselves striving after the best they know.[3] Along with the traditional stories, Plato repudiates the notion, so current in antiquity, of the 'envy' or 'jealousy' of the gods, which renders human prosperity so precarious. As we read in Herodotus[4]: 'God blasts with his thunderbolt the animals that overtop their fellows . . . while the little animals never irritate him . . . God suffers no one to be proud except himself.' The story of the ring of Polycrates, also told by Herodotus, is the *locus classicus* on this topic.[5] 'Your vast successes do not please me', wrote his friendly monitor, 'because I know for a fact that the Deity has an envious disposition . . . I have never yet heard of any one who enjoyed unbroken success, without

'I dissect unceasingly: it amuses me, and when in the end I discover corruption in something that people believe to be pure, gangrene in what looks most beautiful, I raise my head and laugh.' The words seem to illuminate for a moment the moral death of a soul.

[1] *Greek Religious Thought*, Introduction, p. xxiv.

[2] *Republic*, 379.

[3] *Laws*, iv, 716, 905–7.

[4] Bk. vii, c. 10ϵ.

[5] Bk. iii, 39–43.

eventually coming to a bad end and being cut off, root and branch.'

Plato makes a target more than once of this unworthy conception. 'Envy', he says, 'has no place in the celestial choir.'[1] A good man will not seek to harm even his enemy;[2] how much less can we think of such a temper in connexion with a Being whose nature is absolute goodness? 'In God there is no sort or kind of unrighteousness. He is perfectly righteous; and there is nothing more like him than a man who becomes as righteous as he can.'[3] Hence we must summarily dismiss the popular conception of the gods as tempting men, either by direct instigation or by temporarily blinding their minds, to the sins which involve them in ruin. The idea of Ate, infatuation or moral blindness, is frequently resorted to by Homer and the tragedians as an explanation of actions prompted by sudden and irresistible impulse, which the agent, when he 'comes to himself', as we say, finds hard to acknowledge as his own, so foreign do they seem to his habitual instincts and principles.

> Action is transitory—a step, a blow,
> The motion of a muscle—this way or that—
> 'Tis done; *and in the after-vacancy*
> *We wonder at ourselves like men betrayed.*[4]

For the sense of divided personality which Wordsworth's lines describe Homer's usual explanation is, 'Zeus deprived me of my wits'; or, more elaborately expressed, it is 'Ate, eldest daughter of Zeus, a power of bane, who blindeth all and entangleth this one or that'.[5] And Aeschylus, in lines which Plato quotes, says that 'God plants guilt among men when he desires utterly to destroy a

[1] *Phaedrus*, 247.
[2] The Socratic principle enunciated in the *Crito*, 49.
[3] *Theaetetus*, 176.
[4] Dedication of *The White Doe of Rylstone*.
[5] *Iliad*, xix, 90 and 137.

house'. But Plato vehemently repudiates the suggestion 'that God, who is good, can be the author of evil to any one. He is the author of all good things but of good things only. If evils come, as come they do, we must find out some other theory to account for them.' [1]

So much for Plato's characterization of the divine. Only so should we speak of God, for only such an one is worthy of our adoration as a Being in whose likeness we would fain fashion our own souls. Likeness to God (ὁμοίωσις τῷ θεῷ) is the phrase in which Plato's ethics pass into religion. And such a Being he introduces in the mythical cosmogony of the *Timaeus* as the δημιουργός, the maker and fashioner of the visible world, the creator of its order and harmony. This time-world of ours had its origin, he tells us, in the goodness of its divine Author.[2] 'He was good, and no goodness can ever have jealousy of anything. And being free from jealousy, he desired that all things should be as like himself as possible. This is the true beginning of creation and of the world, as we shall do well in believing on the testimony of wise men: God (ὁ θεός) desired that all things should be good and nothing bad, in so far as this could be accomplished.'

We must not, however, read too much into any one's words, or press them in a sense which they did not originally bear. The associations of language make it difficult for the ordinary modern reader to avoid identifying the Good in Plato too exclusively with the ethically good. But this is to forget, not only the aesthetic analogy already referred to, but also the central place held by mathematics in Plato's thinking. Plato, we are told, had a famous lecture on 'The Good' which he never published. It seems to have been an attempt to sum up the quintessence of his teaching; and, according to an anecdote which has come down to us from antiquity, 'Aristotle was always telling' how most of those who heard the lecture went

[1] *Republic*, 379–80. [2] *Timaeus*, 29–30.

away disappointed. They came expecting to hear about some of the recognized good things, and when they heard of nothing but Arithmetic and Astronomy and the Limit and the One, they thought it all very strange.[1] The modern reader of some of the Dialogues is apt to feel a similar disappointment. Yet Plato's method of going to work may, perhaps, yield us in the end the more practical conclusions on which his own heart was set, just as much as the heart of his hearers.

What Plato is thinking of in this phrase of the *Timaeus* is, in the first instance, as the sequel of the Dialogue shows, rather the order and harmony, the carefully co-ordinated structure, of the visible universe, which makes it 'a worthy image of its maker', or of the eternal world of Ideas or Forms on the pattern of which he constructed it. For, again, we must not read too much into the term Creator, which is perhaps too freely used in English translations. Plato speaks of this 'God' as the maker and father of the visible universe, occasionally as the begetter (*ὁ γεννήσας πατήρ*). But often where Jowett, for example, uses the term creator, Plato's Greek would be more directly rendered 'he who constructed or put together' the world (*ὁ συνιστάς, ὁ συνθείς*), and the term *δημιουργός*, which is used sometimes by itself and sometimes linked with 'father', is the ordinary word for craftsman or artificer. The process of world-making is not represented by Plato as if the visible world were created, so to say, 'out of nothing', but as the bringing of order and measure into what already existed in a chaotic and disorderly state, and so fashioning out of that chaos a Kosmos or universe.[2] Obviously his creative function does

[1] Aristoxenos, quoted by Burnet, *Greek Philosophy from Thales to Plato*, p. 221.

[2] 'Finding the whole visible sphere not at rest, but moving in an irregular and disorderly manner, out of disorder he brought order, considering that this was far better than the other.' (30.)

'The elements had different places, before the universe that was arranged out of them came into being. And at first all things were without reason

not extend to the eternal world of pure forms or essences to which he looks as a pattern—'the self-existent Ideas unperceived by sense, and apprehended by reason alone'. The pattern is an eternal reality or, as he expresses it perforce in terms of time, 'it exists in its reality throughout all ages'.[1] This timeless world of Ideas or Forms is constantly declared by Plato to be the world of true reality and of exact knowledge; and in the *Republic* the Idea of the Good, to which he assigns such a pre-eminent position, seems to express the conception of this intelligible world as a completely articulated system, a perfect whole. Some have argued therefore that for Plato, as a philosophic thinker, the Idea of the good was the Supreme God and that the Creator in the *Timaeus* is to be regarded either as a subordinate Demigod or as a purely mythical figure for popular consumption. But, as Professor Burnet insists, Plato himself lends no countenance to such an identification. God is always for him a soul or living mind and in that sense personal, while the Ideas constitute an impersonal system of thoughts or types with a self-subsistent reality of their own. It is only in connexion with the construction and ordering of the sensible world, as we have seen, that God is introduced. The self-subsistence of the Ideas did not present a problem to Plato's mind; it seemed to him natural that such eternal patterns should subsist. It was only in later times that they came to be treated, by Christian thinkers, as the thoughts or world-plan of a divine mind: Plato did not feel the need of a Supreme Mind in that connexion, as if to sustain the world of Ideas in existence. But there is no principle of movement, no creative *nisus*, in the Ideas as such, no

and measure, being altogether such as everything may be expected to be in the absence of God. This being their nature, God fashioned them by form and number. Let us always, and in all that we say, hold that God made them, as far as possible the fairest and best, out of things which were not fair and good.' (53.)

[1] *Τὸ μὲν γὰρ δὴ παράδειγμα πάντα αἰῶνά ἐστιν ὄν*, 38 c.

reason why they should manifest themselves in a sensible world at all. Hence God is needed in Plato's scheme as Creator, to explain the existence of the visible world and its orderly motions. It is, in fact, as the self-moving cause of the ordered movements of the physical world that Plato, in the *Phaedrus* and elsewhere, professes to demonstrate his existence. While there is much that is imaginative in the form of statement, we must at least therefore take seriously his conception of a divine intelligence as the creative source of cosmic order; and in that case, as Professor Burnet says, 'Plato brought the idea of God into philosophy for the first time'.[1]

If Plato's Creator is not all that modern theism demands, Plato himself would have been the first to acknowledge the difficulties which he had not solved. That he was not unaware of them is sufficiently indicated by his own statement at the outset of the discussion in the *Timaeus*. 'It is a hard task', he says, 'to find the Maker and Father of this Universe, and when you have found him it is impossible to declare him to all men.'[2] That statement also explains his attitude towards the polytheism of the popular faith. Neither Plato—nor Aristotle, with his great doctrine of the Unmoved Mover, the cause of all motion as the object of the world's desire—was of the race of the Hebrew prophets. Plato consistently held that philosophy or reasoned thought is for the few; the mass of mankind must be content with 'true opinion' and be guided by persuasion. 'True opinion, we must admit, is shared by all men, but reason by the gods alone, and a very small portion of mankind.'[3] That being so, he did not think it necessary, or indeed desirable, to interfere with the worship of the traditional gods of the city, the gods by law established,[4] so long as these retained their sanctity for their worshippers, and so continued to serve a genuinely religious

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 336.
[2] *Timaeus*, 28 C.
[3] *Ibid.*, 51 E.
[4] Οἱ κατὰ νόμον θεοὶ ὄντες, *Laws*, X. 904 A.

purpose. Centuries later, however, Plato's theological speculations, and the *Timaeus* in particular, exercised the profoundest influence upon the religious philosophy of Alexandria and upon the shaping of Christian dogma; while Platonism, unadulterated and thought out to its own consistent conclusions in the great system of Plotinus, was the last rival to yield place to the new faith at the close of the Ancient world.

CHAPTER VIII

THE RELIGION OF ISRAEL: THE ADVANCE FROM A TRIBAL MONOLATRY TO A SPIRITUAL MONOTHEISM

Tribal, or as we may call it in its later and most comprehensive form, national religion, is in principle the worship of a single god. But monolatry is not monotheism. Although the tribe or nation may worship its own god exclusively, the existence of other gods is not denied. Rather it is, as we have seen, taken for granted, as well as the natural claim of those other gods upon the respect and obedience of their own worshippers. There is a long road to travel from monolatry of this type to a strict monotheism, and only in an exceptional race and in exceptional historical circumstances can we expect to find the idea of the divine unity effectively realized by a whole nation. The history of the Jewish people provides, however, one great historical instance (world-historical in the highest sense) in which the advance from a tribal monolatry to a pure monotheism was actually made, and it will be instructive for us to note the steps by which the transition took place and the resultant change in the conception of the god and of the mode in which he should be worshipped. We shall find that they were connected in the closest way with the history of the nation. It was not abstract philosophical reflection, but the experience of history, that was operative in the development.

The Israelites, as we saw, brought the worship of Yahweh with them from the desert when they entered Canaan. He was thus at the outset the god of a wandering pastoral tribe, or League of tribes, always more or less on a war footing. He was a god of war, not in the sense that he was invoked exclusively before a battle, but from the nature of the desert life this aspect was most prominent. It was in war that the unity of the tribe,

or in religious language the presence of Yahweh, was most vividly realized. He was their leader in the fight: the ark of God, the visible sign of his presence, was carried with them into battle and was regarded as an assurance of victory. 'The name Israel', says Wellhausen, 'means "El does battle", and Jehovah was the warrior El, after whom the nation styled itself. The camp was, so to speak, at once the cradle in which the nation was nursed and the smithy in which it was welded into unity; it was also the primitive sanctuary. There Israel was, and there was Jehovah. If in times of peace the relations between the two had become dormant, they were at once called forth into the fullest activity when the alarm of danger was raised.'[1] Yahweh continued throughout their history to be specially associated by Israel with the period in which the wandering tribes were welded into something like national unity, as we see in the recurring formula, 'I am Yahweh thy God, that brought thee up out of the land of Egypt'.

But after the conquest of Canaan, when they settled down as an agricultural and wine-growing people, Yahweh became naturally the god of the land which he had given to his people. There were, of course, in existence throughout the length and breadth of the land shrines or sacred places, at which the older inhabitants had worshipped with agricultural rites the local 'baal' or lord, the giver of fertility to that particular district or cultivated area. But, just as the Canaanites were dispossessed by the Israelites, so their sacred places were transferred to the conquering god and became the local seats of his worship. Often placed on a hill-top, these are the 'high places', worship at which is denounced by the priestly editors of the national history as apostasy from Yahweh, a serving of Baal and Ashtaroth, which provoked the righteous anger of the national god, and led him repeatedly to punish his people

[1] Article 'Israel' in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 9th. ed.

by delivering them into the hands of their enemies, and caused him ultimately to 'remove them out of his sight', when they were carried into captivity to Assyria and Babylon. 'For so it was' (says the priestly historian, narrating the fall of Samaria and pointing the moral) 'that the children of Israel had sinned against Yahweh their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt. . . and had feared other gods, and walked in the statutes of the heathen whom Yahweh cast out from before the children of Israel. . . . They built them high places in all their cities . . . and they set them up pillars and poles on every high hill and under every green tree, and there they burnt incense in all the high places, as did the heathen whom Yahweh carried away before them.'[1]

But the priestly writer is interpreting the history from the standpoint of the Deuteronomic legislation of a much later date, which prohibited sacrifice at any other place than the Temple in Jerusalem and laid down minute regulations for the celebration there. His account, therefore, gives a completely false impression of the pre-exilic state of affairs, in which these altars were dedicated to Yahweh himself and the people of the countryside gathered at these local sanctuaries with a glad heart and a good conscience to serve him with thanksgiving for all the blessings of this life. No doubt the ritual observed and the temper of the gathering on such occasions did not differ greatly from those of the surrounding nations. With the settlement in Canaan there had come about a certain amount of fusion between the religion of the conquerors and that of the conquered inhabitants. The functions of the agricultural Baal had been transferred to Yahweh; and upon that followed naturally the incorporation into Yahweh's worship of the rites and ceremonies and festival seasons appropriate to the religion of an agricultural community. With the 'high places' in fact, the Israelites no doubt took over 'the

[1] 2 Kings xvii, 8–11.

established ritual custom';[1] so that, according to the angle from which we look at it, the position may be described by saying that the worship of Yahweh superseded that of the Baals in their own sanctuaries, or that the Israelites continued the worship of the old gods of the land under the covering aegis of the national deity. But the attitude of the people involved no conscious declension or disloyalty to Yahweh; it was to him that the sacrifices were offered and in his honour that the feasts were held. When the prophets begin to denounce the religious state of the nation, it is not the worship of 'other gods' on which they primarily fasten. That was recognized as a special offence against the god of the land, as when Solomon built high places near Jerusalem for the gods of his foreign wives, or when Ahab maintained, under the influence of Jezebel, the prophets and the cult of the Tyrian Baal alongside of the worship of Yahweh. National patriotism and national religion combined to rebel against these things and, in the case of Ahab, succeeded in overthrowing the perpetrators. But what the prophets of the eighth century and their successors fastened on in the first instance was the empty character of the religion of the Israelites themselves—the emptiness of a merely ceremonial religion in the absence of 'judgement' and 'righteousness', i.e. of practical religion and common humanity in daily life. 'I hate and despise your feast days,' Amos makes Yahweh say; 'I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me your burnt offerings and meal offerings, I will not accept them. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs: for I will not hear the melody of thy lutes. But let judgement roll down as waters and righteousness as an ever-flowing

[1] Moore, *History of Religions*, ii, p. 7. Long afterwards the Assyrian colonists who were brought to Samaria to take the place of the deported inhabitants, finding that things did not prosper with them, attributed this to their ignorance of the manner of the god of the land, and at their request the King of Assyria sent them one of the deported priests, who taught them how they should fear Yahweh (2 Kings xvii. 24 ff).

stream.'[1] The whole ritual here is addressed to Yahweh; everything in that respect is above reproach. But Yahweh will have none of it, for it is a mere empty acknowledgement.

As every one knows, it was through the teaching of the prophets, from the earliest of whom I have just quoted, that the religion of Israel was transformed from a purely national institution into a universal religion, or at least into a faith from which a universal religion could spring. The popular meaning of the word prophet is one who foretells future events, and this was long the tone in which theologians talked of the Old Testament prophets. Volumes innumerable have been written to demonstrate the fulfilment of specific predictions. But we do well to divest ourselves of these associations in thinking of the great preachers of national righteousness and personal religion whom we know under that name. Their warnings and denunciations, so far as they affect the future, deal with the inevitable consequences, to men and nations, of moral slackness and social corruption. The essential equipment of an Isaiah or a Jeremiah was a profound conviction of the moral foundations of the world, combined with a sane political insight, capable of rising above a misguided patriotism and reading the clearly indicated signs of the times—the realities, as we might say, of the political situation.

The beginnings of written prophecy may be placed about the middle of the eighth century. The first half of the eighth century was a period of peace and prosperity for the two kingdoms into which the dominions of Solomon had been divided. They were for the time at peace with each other. National security was accompanied by a great increase in material prosperity, due largely to the development of trade and commerce. Such a development had been a notable feature of Solomon's reign; but the disruption of the kingdom, internal feuds, and external

[1] Amos v. 21–3; cf. Hosea ii. 11, Isaiah i. 11–17.

wars had checked its growth, and up till the eighth century the Israelites had remained for the most part an agricultural people. But now it is not too much to say that, just as Israel after the conquest of Canaan passed from the nomadic to the agricultural stage, so at this time —though agriculture remained, of course, the occupation of a large proportion of the population—society as a whole assumed in the nation the characteristic features of a commercial community. And with the change to a more complex civilization there sprang up also the problems which in the course of history have invariably accompanied it. The rapid growth of wealth and its accumulation in comparatively few hands, by the very severance of classes which it brings about, generates a social hard-heartedness, due largely to a lack of mutual understanding. In the same process the poor become poorer; the peasant proprietors are unable to maintain their holdings, and the growth of large estates goes on. We hear of the frequency of mortgages, the increase of the class dependent on wages, and occasionally even of free Israelites selling themselves into slavery. Luxury engenders a hard and selfish habit of mind, and commercialism in its big transactions loses sight of humane considerations, and in the scramble for gain is apt to be too tolerant of deception and fraud.

All these disintegrating forces were at work in Palestine in the eighth century. It is 'man's inhumanity to man' which is the first motive of Hebrew prophecy as we find it in Amos. There was a brave show of religion in those days. The sacrifices were more lavish, the ritual was more splendid than ever; the national sanctuaries were thronged with worshippers, well pleased with themselves, for did not the prosperity of the country prove that the national god was pleased with his people?[1] But the glance of Amos, penetrating beneath the surface-show, laid bare the social sins and the moral rottenness which are the sure presage of dis-

[1] Cf. Moore, *History of Religions*, ii, p. 14.

aster to the nation in which they flourish unchecked. A simple herdsman of Tekoah on the edge of the desert, his indignation is stirred by the heartless luxury of 'them that are at ease in Zion, them that are secure in the mountain of Samaria'—'that lie upon beds of ivory and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock and the calves out of the midst of the stall; that sing idle songs to the sound of the lute, that drink wine in bowls and anoint themselves with the chief ointments; but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph'. His gorge rises against the women who whet and incite their menfolk to such doings. 'Ye kine of Bashan', he calls them, 'that are in the mountain of Samaria, which oppress the poor, which crush the needy, which say unto their lords, Bring, and let us drink.' It is the abuse of justice and the wrongs of the poor that rouse him to a white heat of indignation. 'Hear this, O ye that would swallow up the needy, and cause the poor of the land to fail, saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat? making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and dealing falsely with balances of deceit; that we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes, and sell the refuse of the wheat. Yahweh hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works. . . . The end is come upon my people Israel: I will not again pass by them any more.'

Amos is far from denying the peculiar bond between Yahweh and Israel: on the contrary, he rehearses the great events of the nation's history, attributing them all to the providence of Yahweh. But in a single often-quoted sentence he transforms at a stroke the whole conception of this relation between them: 'You only have I known of all the families of the earth: *therefore I will visit upon you all your iniquities*.' The ordinary conception of a national god, that held by the Israelites throughout their history, and still held by Amos's contemporaries, was that of a god

who espouses his people's cause, who may be angry with them and withdraw his countenance from them for a season, but will not keep his anger for ever, or indeed for long. As a national god, he cannot finally abandon his people to their enemies; it would damage his own prestige to do so. Moses is made to represent the case to Yahweh in that light in the Book of Numbers.[1] If he should proceed to disinherit Israel as he had threatened, Moses says, 'the Egyptians shall hear it', and 'the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying, because Yahweh was not able to bring this people into the land which he sware unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness'. And Joshua pleads similarly when the Israelites are smitten at Ai: 'O Lord, what shall I say after Israel hath turned their backs before their enemies? For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: and what wilt thou do for thy great name?'[2] The strained relations are bound, therefore, sooner or later to come to an end. Profession of repentance is easy and, in a religion of ritual, pardon for offences can always be purchased on terms that are not onerous. Hence, naturally, Amaziah, 'the priest of Bethel', is scandalized that Amos should prophesy, as he does, the captivity of Israel and the total obliteration of Yahweh's people.

But all this is changed when Yahweh is conceived in purely ethical terms as absolute righteousness, a God of justice and mercy. There is only one way to the favour of such a God: 'Seek good and not evil, that ye may live: and *so* Yahweh of hosts will be with you, as ye say.' Otherwise 'the day of Yahweh' to which they presumptuously look forward—the day on which Yahweh will avenge himself and them on their national enemies—will be 'darkness and not light, very dark and no brightness at all': a day of ultimate judgement upon themselves and their sins. On

[1] xiv. 13–19. Cf. Exodus, xxxii. 12. [2] Joshua, vii. 7–9.

the ground of nationality alone, Amos declares, the children of Israel are no more to Yahweh than the children of the Ethiopians; and the doom of Israel which the prophet pronounces follows close upon that pronounced upon the neighbouring peoples—on Damascus, on Philistia, on Tyre, on Edom, on Ammon, and on Moab—for their characteristic national sins, their atrocities in war and offences against common humanity.

Moreover, as soon as God is so conceived, there is no room for any other gods beside him. The gods of the heathen become no more than idols, empty names, 'nothings', as the Prophets sometimes call them. Yahweh ceases to be merely a national Providence, carving out a place and a destiny for his chosen people; he comes instinctively to be regarded as the shaper of the whole world's destiny, the universal Providence which allots to each nation its place in the world and its mission in history. This consequence may not be explicitly drawn at once in all its breadth and fullness—perhaps not before the Second Isaiah do we find pure monotheism clearly and adequately stated—but, in principle, it is applied at once by Amos in his scornful repudiation of any special claim for Israel on the ground of nationality alone: 'Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt?' Yes, the prophet answers, but no less 'the Philistines from Caphtor and the Syrians from Kir'. And the unnamed nation which is to destroy Israel and deport the remnant of its inhabitants is to be set in motion against them by Yahweh himself: 'Behold, I will raise up against you a nation, O house of Israel, and they shall afflict you from the entering in of Hamath unto the brook of Arabah.' . . . 'I will cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus.' Thus in Amos already, as in Isaiah's well-known phrase, Assyria, clearly indicated though not named, appears as 'the rod of Yahweh's anger', an unconscious instrument of the Divine purpose. And so we have the beginnings of a philosophy of history.

The national catastrophe which Amos foresaw was not long delayed. In 733 the kingdom of Israel became a vassal state of the Assyrian empire, and twelve years later, after an ineffectual revolt, all the inhabitants of mark were carried into captivity to distant parts of the Assyrian dominions. With the advent of Assyria, it has been said, the Israelites were brought for the first time into contact with the main stream of world-history. 'Until that date', says Wellhausen, 'there had subsisted in Palestine and Syria a number of petty kingdoms and nationalities, which had their friendships and enmities with one another, but paid no heed to anything outside their own immediate environment, and revolved each on its own axis, careless of the outside world, until suddenly the Assyrians burst in upon them. They introduced a new factor, the conception of the world—in the historical sense of that expression. In presence of that conception the petty nationalities lost their centre of gravity, brute force dispelled their illusions, they flung their gods "to the moles and to the bats".'[1] The tribal gods who had led them often to victory over one another were powerless before the massed force of the world-empire. 'Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria?'[2] So Sennacherib boasted, not without reason, in his message to Hezekiah. But just in so far as the prophets of Israel had risen above the tribal conception to the idea of God as absolute righteousness, they were armed with an unswerving faith in the supremacy of Right—a faith which enabled them to fit even the grim fact of Assyria into their scheme of things. Israel and Judah might be overthrown and their peoples carried into captivity, but for the prophets Yahweh was no god of a conquered clan, to be effaced before his conquerors or assigned a minor place in the motley pantheon of a heathen empire. He was the power 'above all gods', to whom all the

[1] Article 'Israel'. [2] Isaiah, xxxvi. 18.

nations, including Assyria, and, after Assyria, Babylon and Persia, are but the instruments of his righteous will. 'What was thus revealed to the eye of their spirit', says Kuenen, 'was no less than the august idea of the *moral government of the world*'.[1]

It was thus in the crisis of Israel's fate that this sublime monotheistic faith was born in the noblest spirits of the nation. It grew in strength and became more widely diffused among the people during the century and more of Judah's quasi-independent existence after the downfall of the northern kingdom, and it received its most perfect expression from the great prophet of the Exile whom we know as the Second Isaiah. The magnitude in the change of the national religion effected by the Prophets during the seventh century is sufficiently attested by the single fact that, while the deported Israelites of the northern kingdom were absorbed by the surrounding heathenism without leaving a trace behind, the population of Judah held their faith fast throughout the Babylonian exile, and by means of it were able to maintain their own individuality afterwards in all the circumstances that arose. Patriotism and religion never burned with a purer flame than they did among the exiles of Judah, remembering Zion by the rivers of Babylon and from the Mesopotamian flats lifting their eyes to the hills of home.

The effect of the Exile on Jewish religion was profound and permanent. Banished as they were from 'Yahweh's land' to 'a land that was unclean',[2] the Jews were completely cut off from the whole ritual of sacrifice, inseparably connected as that was by the Deuteronomic legislation with the Temple that had been destroyed. 'They were lying', as Wellhausen says, 'under a sort of vast interdict'. In the absence of public ceremonial their religion was driven inward upon itself, and we detect

[1] *National Religions and Communal Religions*, p. 124.
[2] Amos vii. 17; cf. Hosea ix. 3.

in its utterances a more intimately personal note. What had been formerly a relation between Yahweh and the nation, celebrated by the community at stated intervals—for the ordinary man, we might almost say, little more than part of the routine of good citizenship—came to be realized as a direct relation between the individual and his God. Moreover, the sense of national guilt and national punishment has replaced the festal character of the old rejoicings before Yahweh'; and the teaching of the prophets, with their stern demand for personal righteousness as the foundation of national well-being, has borne its fruit. The Psalms which date from this period are full of the sense of sin, and their expressions of heart-felt penitence have made them, it has been truly said, 'the confessional of the world'.[1] They express also the sense of peace and reconciliation which confession brings to the contrite heart—the realization of a communion with the divine, which was the root from which the belief in individual immortality first sprang among the Hebrews.[2]

But the intensification of personal religion does not mean the isolation of the individual. Religion, as we have abundantly seen, lives naturally in an atmosphere of fellowship and may be said to demand that atmosphere for its maintenance. This general axiom applies with special force to a people scattered, as the Jews were, in a strange land among the worshippers of other gods. Only by clinging together could they hope to keep intact, and preserve for future generations, the characteristic tenets of their hardly won and hardly tried faith. Hence the practice of meeting together on the Sabbath, out of which the synagogues were afterwards developed, came into use at this time. Several of the prophetic writings were in existence, and it may have been customary even then to read aloud at such gatherings the passages that set forth

[1] G. A. Smith, *The Book of Isaiah*, ii, xii.

[2] Cf. the author's *Idea of Immortality*, pp. 15–19.

the course of Yahweh's providence in the past and the promises of ultimate restoration to their own land. The observance of the Sabbath acquired in this way, as the sign of a common religion, much greater importance than it originally possessed, and the same is true of the rite of circumcision. In revulsion, too, from the gross idolatry surrounding them on all sides, the Jews developed that hatred and contempt of image-worship in all its forms and that intolerance of 'other gods' which henceforth characterized them—and which was at least one of the causes of the universal dislike entertained for them in the ancient world, a world in which, as Professor Moore says, 'it was good manners to treat your neighbour's religion with outward respect'. A nation without any visible object of worship seemed to antiquity no better than a nation of atheists. The language of Tacitus (*Hist.* v. 9. 1) suggests to us the incredulous surprise of Pompey when he forced his way into the Holy of Holies—the inmost shrine of the Temple—and found it completely empty (vacuam sedem et inania arcana). It was not always so in earlier Israel, we know, but after the Exile Judaism was immune to the temptations to which in the past it had so often succumbed.

It is in the sublime pages of the Second Isaiah, dating from about the middle of the sixth century (between the first appearance of Cyrus on the horizon and the taking of Babylon in 538) that we find at last fully stated the pure monotheism which was the final outcome of Israel's spiritual experience. Whereas Micah, the contemporary of Isaiah, still accorded to the gods of other nations their status as real and independent deities,[1] the gods of other nations are to the prophet of the Exile simply non-existent. They are creations of the carpenter's and the

[1] 'For all the peoples,' he says in his idyllic picture of the latter days, 'will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of Yahweh, our God, for ever and ever' iv. 5.

goldsmith's art, 'false gods', existent only in the imagination of their deluded worshippers. With mordant irony he describes the fashioning of a god. 'Have ye not known?' he cries impatiently to the idolators in his opening chapters, 'Have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in . . . To whom then will ye liken me, that I should be equal to him? saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and see who hath created these, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by name, by the greatness of his might . . . Thus saith Yahweh, the King of Israel, and his redeemer, Yahweh Sabaoth: I am the first, and I am the last, and beside me there is no God . . . Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else'. So from henceforth, although his relation to his ancient people is not dissolved, nor his gracious purposes with them cancelled, the God of Israel becomes for that people 'the God of the whole earth'. This is the monotheism that was Israel's legacy to the world; Christianity and Islam are both daughters of Jerusalem.

The merging of the idea of Yahweh as the national Providence in the conception of One who 'created the heavens' and 'formed the earth' necessarily reacted upon the prophet's philosophy of history. We have noted the advance towards monotheism in some of the earlier prophets—as in Isaiah's view of Assyria as the rod of Yahweh's anger. Jeremiah similarly describes Nebuchadnezzar as Yahweh's 'servant'. The heathen nations are repeatedly represented in this way as instruments employed by Yahweh for the chastisement of his sinful and rebellious people. But in general the scope of his purpose appears to be limited to the education of Israel. Apart

from their incidental function in this historic process of discipline, the life and destiny of those other nations seems to lie outside any divine scheme of things. When they have served this purpose, they are cast aside or broken to pieces. Yahweh is represented as punishing them—for their wickedness in general and the cruelties they have inflicted upon Israel in particular. For, though they are the unwitting instruments of Yahweh's will, that in no way condones atrocities to which the perpetrators were instigated by quite different motives. But the point to note is that in such punishment there is no gracious purpose of discipline suggested, such as is the case with Israel. It is requital pure and simple, and when the process is complete they disappear; in a recurring phrase of Jeremiah's, 'Yahweh makes a full end' of them. But the more clearly Yahweh is conceived as the God of the whole earth, the more impossible does it become to restrict his ethical and spiritual purpose within the limits of a single nationality. In the Second Isaiah this change of attitude makes itself felt in various ways. Hitherto other nations have been introduced only as instruments of Israel's punishment; but Cyrus is now hailed as Israel's Deliverer. The prophet refers to him as Yahweh's 'shepherd' or, more strikingly still, as Yahweh's 'anointed'.[1] It would appear from the context that this tone did not altogether commend itself to some of his fellow-countrymen. To owe their deliverance to a heathen potentate, however distinguished, was in their eyes hardly fitting. They looked for Yahweh himself to deliver them 'with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness and with signs and with wonders',[2] as they believed he had done in the legendary past of their race. The prophet answers, in effect, that to those who recognize Yahweh as the one divine creative Power, his agency is as evident in a natural sequence of events as in any recorded signs and portents.

[1] xliv. 28, and xlv. 1. [2] Deut. xxvi. 8.

'I have made the earth and created men upon it; I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded. [Hence, as for Cyrus,] I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will make straight all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall let my exiles go free, not for price nor reward, saith Yahweh Sabaoth'.[1]

Moreover, as regards the future of Israel when resettled in their own land, this prophet has nothing to say of a Messianic King ruling in Zion and extending his sway over the neighbouring nations. National independence for a people so small was in that day of world-empires no longer within the range of practical politics; the most that could be hoped for was local autonomy, freedom to manage their own affairs under the suzerainty of one or other of the empires which divided the world between them. Nothing is said, therefore, of a King. The prophet refers only in general terms to 'magistrates and overseers'. 'I will make thy officers peace and thy overseers righteousness.' This is but part of his clear conviction that the calling of Israel is not to a political hegemony among the nations, accompanied by an unexampled material prosperity—which had been the patriotic dream of the nation sanctioned by some of the earlier prophets—but to a spiritual mission, whose object is no less than the winning of the whole world to Yahweh's truth and righteousness. 'My servant' is the key-word of the prophecy. It is the epithet applied to Israel throughout, 'my servant whom I have chosen'; and a servant is chosen not for his own sake, as a favourite upon whom indulgences are heaped, but for the service he has to render. To Israel has been committed Yahweh's Torah or Law; they are a people 'that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law'. And, as the prophet puts it again and again, the mission of Israel is to be 'a light to the Gentiles',—to spread the knowledge of Yahweh's righteous

[1] xlv. 12–13

law to the ends of the earth. 'Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my spirit upon him; he shall bring forth judgement to the Gentiles . . . he shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgement in the earth; and far lands shall wait for his law'. The delightful apologue preserved for us in the Book of Jonah—written possibly a little later—is perhaps the most gracious and winning presentation of the universalism bred in the best minds of the nation by the new conception of God. Looking to the beautiful lesson with which it closes, Professor Sellin has described it, not undeservedly, as 'one of the most precious jewels of Hebrew literature'.

CHAPTER IX

LATER JUDAISM AND THE LAW

When we turn from the impassioned universalism of the Second Isaiah to the subsequent history of the Jewish people and their religion, the effect is on the whole disheartening. The first thing which must strike every student is that the Jewish religion, as re-established in Jerusalem after the Exile, was not the spiritual or purely ethical religion of the Prophets. We have seen how little stress the Prophets lay on rites and ceremonies. We have heard their denunciation of sacrifices and offerings, feastings and fastings, as worse than useless,—an actual offence to Yahweh,—in the absence of that personal religion which finds its expression in social righteousness. Isaiah does not yield to Amos in the vehemence of his protest: 'To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me, saith Yahweh: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts, and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. . . . Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; . . . Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. . . . Wash you make you clean; . . . cease to do evil, learn to do well; seek judgement, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow' (i. 11–17). 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' says Hosea, 'and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings' (vi. 6); and the prophetic attitude finds its most memorable expression in the noble and often quoted verses of Micah—'Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will Yahweh be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my

soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Yahweh require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?' (vi. 6–8). The whole ritual of sacrifice is thus to the Prophets something completely secondary. Jeremiah, the last of the pre-exilic prophets, seems actually to set it completely aside. 'I spake not unto your fathers,' he says (vii. 22–3), 'nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices: but this thing I commanded them, saying, Hearken unto my voice and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the way that I command you.' Amos, the earliest, had similarly reminded his generation that sacrifice and offerings were unknown during the forty years in the wilderness (v. 25).

The protests of the prophets are usually understood, not as a repudiation of sacrifices and ceremonial observances as such, but only as a condemnation of them when offered as a substitute for the religion of the heart and for justice and kindly feeling between man and man, between class and class. But there seems to be good reason for thinking that their contention went further than that. The Prophetic position is well stated by Principal Skinner in his volume on Jeremiah.

'Not only is sacrifice of no avail as a substitute for righteous conduct, but a perfect religious relationship is possible without sacrifice at all. . . . There is no doubt that Amos shared the view of Hosea that the desert sojourn was the ideal period in Israel's history; and the obvious inference is that if Jahveh could be properly served without sacrifice then, he could be so still. Sacrifice, therefore, is no necessary term of communion between Jahveh and Israel: it does not belong to the essence of religion. And that the principle extends to the cultus in general, and was held by other prophets, is strongly suggested by the fact that they never demand a purified ritual, but always and exclusively the fulfilment of the ethical commands of Jahveh.' [1]

[1] *Prophecy and Religion*, pp. 181–2.

No doubt it would be going too far to think of them as leading a campaign which had for its object the total abolition of the sacrificial cult, but they clearly taught that, for true religion as they conceived it, 'sacrificial worship was at best an irrelevance, and at worst an offence'.

In contrast to the inwardness of the prophetic ideal, the religion of the Jewish people, as it shaped itself after the Exile, seems therefore to represent the triumph of the Priest; and during the centuries that followed it can hardly be denied that ceremonialism, legalism, and particularism tended to tighten their hold upon the nation. From the point of view of religious development this cannot but appear to us a backward step; yet the causes which led to it are sufficiently intelligible, if we consider the circumstances of the case. We have seen throughout their history of what different elements the Israelitish people were composed, how, in spite of the high standard of fidelity to Yahweh and his law set by their prophets and leaders, there was a constant tendency in the people at large to accommodate themselves to the heathenish rites and practices of the original Canaanites and of the neighbouring countries. We note the distinction drawn by the later prophets between the true Israel and Israel according to the flesh. Now the Exile was in effect a long sifting process by which the former were separated from the latter. Many of those who were carried into captivity doubtless accommodated themselves to their Babylonian surroundings and were absorbed, like the Ten Tribes before them. It was only the faithful 'remnant', in Isaiah's phrase, that survived the long process of natural selection. Among those who thus clung to their ancient faith it was inevitable that the sense of nationality and the feeling of being a peculiar people should be intensified. Their religion and their history were inextricably interwoven; and all the associations of the past, including the ritual of the Temple, which had latterly been the one

sanctuary of Yahweh's worship, could not fail to gain a sacred importance in their eyes.

It would be unfair, therefore, to regard the priestly Law as a deliberate attempt to substitute a system of ritual observance for the inward piety of prophetic religion. It was not a movement conceived by its authors as hostile to the spiritual ideals of the prophets. The prophetic writings continued to be read in the synagogues alongside of the Law throughout all the centuries of Judaism. It was the scribes who preserved these books for us and multiplied copies for the pious Jew. The Law and the Prophets were two sides, two aspects, of the same religion; and the scribes in Babylon who first codified the Law and edited the national history probably regarded themselves as completing the work of the prophets and putting into practical shape the only feasible scheme for realizing their ideal of a nation obedient at last in all respects to Yahweh's will. And the bald historical fact is that, with all its externalism and legalism, the priestly Law succeeded in realizing what the impassioned adjurations of the prophets had hitherto failed to achieve. The Jewish people, or at least the majority of the nation, remained henceforth permanently faithful to Yahweh's Law in a sense in which that could not be asserted of them for any length of time at any previous period of their history. It was to the Law and its observance, in fact, that they owed their continued existence as a nation. It was accordingly an instinct of self-preservation that prompted the stress laid by the scribes in Babylon upon the details of ritual and ceremonial observances; only by such external signs could the Jews ensure their continued existence as a separate people in the midst of surrounding heathendom.

In this sense Judaism has from the first a rigidly national and exclusive character; it is a principle of separation from all the rest of the world. Yet, while it thus perpetuated the existence of the Jews as a separate people, it at the same

time set religion free from the local conditions of a national existence. The future of religion was no longer linked with the idea of a national state in Palestine; and the Pharisees, who were the religious kernel of the nation, showed themselves in the sequel frequently indifferent about political independence, so long as they were not hindered in the exercise of their religion. That religion had become for them the primary and fundamental fact, a fact quite independent of the local habitation and circumstances of its professors. The Jews were scattered during these centuries east and west through the known world. Colonies of them were to be found in every great commercial centre; and wherever the Jew went, his religion went with him. The Jews of the Dispersion—in Alexandria, in Antioch, in Corinth, or in Rome—cherished their religion as conscientiously as their compatriots in Palestine. And as Judaism thus became a bond of spiritual brotherhood independent of any local limits, so it came to be conceived also as no longer bound up with the physical fact of race. The Law makes generous provision for the Gerim, or 'strangers', who desire to join themselves to Israel; and the growing number of proselytes to the Jewish religion during the last pre-Christian centuries is an indication that the universalistic ideal of the prophets still survived. In spite of the ring-fence of ordinances within which the chosen people had entrenched themselves, Judaism continued to regard itself, and to offer itself, not as one religion among many, but as the one true faith, a religion for all mankind. These things we ought to remember whenever we are inclined to pass too sweeping a censure on the later Judaism and its representatives in the New Testament. They may help us to understand how Judaism was fitted to be the parent and nurse of a universal religion, without itself attaining to be one.

The historical background and the course of external

events during the centuries in question may be briefly indicated. The date of the Captivity and the destruction of the Temple by Nebuchadnezzar was 586 B.C., and the period of enforced exile lasted barely fifty years. It came to an end with the downfall of Babylon in 538, when an edict of Cyrus, the Persian conqueror, gave the Jews permission to return to their native country and to rebuild the Temple. The deported Jews had not been subjected to extraordinary hardships by their conquerors. Doubtless they followed, where possible, their old occupations and handicrafts, or found openings in the vast system of trade and commerce of which Babylon was then the centre. At all events we find them at the end of the first fifty years increased in numbers, with considerable property and political influence. They remained in communities with their own official heads and at liberty to consult their prophets. There were rich men among them who owned slaves.[1] Liberal subscriptions were therefore forthcoming for the restoration of the Temple, and a certain number of the exiles started at once for Jerusalem with that end in view. Delays and disappointments followed, but the Temple was in some sort rebuilt and consecrated by 516. It was not, however, till the arrival of a large additional body of their countrymen, about the middle of the following century, that the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt and the Jewish commonwealth firmly established by Nehemiah and Ezra in the form in which, with certain vicissitudes, it continued to exist for more than five hundred years, till the second destruction of the Temple by Titus. It was in the year 444, according to the common reckoning,[2] that there was promulgated at a great gathering of the people the new code of laws and ritual which 'Ezra the priest,

[1] Cf. G. A. Smith, *Isaiah*, ii, pp. 57–8.

[2] So Professor Welch in *The People and the Book*, p. 147. But Professor Barnes, in the same volume (p. 294) places the date of Ezra's promulgation of the Law nearly fifty years later.

the scribe of the law of the God of heaven' (so he is designated in the letter or 'firman' of Artaxerxes, Ezra, vii. 12) brought with him from Babylon, and which the community now solemnly swore to obey.

Ezra's 'Book of the Law of Moses' is considered by modern scholars to have been practically identical with the legal and ritual sections of the Pentateuch. By the priestly editors of the Pentateuch the legislation in question is all represented as enacted by Moses, or in many cases as coming down from pre-Mosaic times, having been directly instituted by Yahweh himself at various junctures in the national history. Thus the Sabbath, for example, was carried back to the Creation of the world and hallowed by God's example; the prohibition of eating the blood was given to Noah along with the permission to eat animal food; circumcision was the seal of the covenant with Abraham; sacrifices (and the ritual appertaining thereto) were instituted by Moses at Sinai. The manner of its institution thus confers upon the law or rite its authority and divine sanction. Instead of simply prescribing, as a rule, how a thing shall be done, the writer describes, as precedent or pattern, the way in which it *was* done in the first instance. The detailed account in Exodus of the sacrifices at the dedication of the Tabernacle, constitute, for example, an epitome of the sacrificial ritual of the Temple.[1] Nothing, however, is more certain, from the internal evidence of the documents themselves, than that, through the whole period from the Judges to Ezekiel, the Law in this systematic form was never the rule of Israel's worship. But from now onwards the Law, as thus codified, became, as it has been said, 'the Magna Charta of Judaism', the name Judaism being best applied in a distinctive sense to the Jewish religion of these later centuries, to dif-

[1] The last nine chapters of the Book of Ezekiel, who was a priest of the Temple before his deportation to Babylon, are in fact a first sketch of what is elaborated in the relative sections of the Pentateuch.

ferentiate it from the religion of Israel in pre-exilic times.

The Jews, as thus re-established in Jerusalem, were primarily a religious community. The High Priest was the only representative head of the people. But in normal times they enjoyed a large measure of what might be called home rule. Their internal affairs, civil as well as religious, were administered by the high priest, with the assistance of a council of elders and notables. Otherwise Palestine was a province of one or other of the world-empires of the time—in the first instance of Persia, till the conquests of Alexander the Great, then of Egypt under the Ptolemies till about 200 B.C., when it was incorporated in the Syrian kingdom of the Seleucidae. More than two centuries passed in this way without incident, marked only by the peaceful penetration of Greek ideas and customs among the upper classes, especially among the priestly aristocracy and their supporters—those afterwards known as Sadducees. With the passage of time, worldliness and unscrupulous personal ambition had also more and more invaded the higher ranks of the priesthood, and in the second century B.C., under the Greek kings of Syria, the high priest himself took the initiative in measures which aimed at a complete Hellenizing of the Jews. This party had apparently represented to Antiochus Epiphanes, the Syrian king of the day, that the Jewish people were ripe for Hellenization; for in 168 B.C., after suppressing a revolt and razing the walls of Jerusalem, the king issued a decree abolishing the temple services, prohibiting Sabbath observance and the rite of circumcision, and commanding all copies of the Law to be burnt. The Temple was deliberately desecrated by the performance of pagan ceremonies, and an altar to Zeus erected on the great altar of burnt offering. The result was naturally the very opposite of what he expected. All the forces of Jewish patriotism were consolidated in defence of their religious liberties. The family of the

Maccabees supplied military leaders, and, on the third anniversary of the desecration of the Temple, the pagan altar—'the abomination of desolation', as it is called in the Book of Daniel and the First Book of the Maccabees—was pulled down, and the building re-dedicated (165 B.C.). In contemporary apocalyptic visions, Judas Maccabaeus, or after his death one of his brothers, was hailed as the promised Messiah. His brother Jonathan soon after combined the office of high priest with that of military leader, and for some sixty or seventy years (owing to the embarrassments and growing weakness of the Seleucid monarchy) the Jews enjoyed a species of independence under the Asmonean dynasty. Aristobulus, in the third generation, assumed the title of King. But the later Maccabees disappointed grievously the religious hopes that had been built upon them, and the advent of the Romans put an end to a somewhat artificial state of affairs. Pompey took Jerusalem in 63 B.C. and placed a Roman garrison in the city.

The earlier wars of the Maccabees were a patriotic effort such as any nation might look back upon with pride; and the memory lingered long among the Jewish populace, keeping alive the hope of a warlike Messiah who might yet restore the national independence,[1] and thereby unfortunately instigating many determined, but hopeless, revolts against the Roman power. For the history of religion a more important result of Antiochus' ill-advised attempt and its frustration was the transfer of power and influence within the nation to the Pharisees, the Puritan party, as they may be called, and the final defeat of all paganizing tendencies. The identification of the people with the Law was henceforth complete. With the destruction of Jeru-

[1] The transformation in popular belief of the Old Testament Messiah, the Prince of Peace, into a Man of War, may, indeed, be said to be due to the Maccabaean tradition. The union of kingly and priestly functions in the Messiah is also due to the combination of these two offices in the persons of the Maccabaean priest-kings. Charles, *Between the Old and the New Testaments*, pp. 79, 89.

salem by Titus (A. D. 70), any semblance of independence which the Jews had latterly enjoyed came to an end, and the immemorial centre of their worship as a religious community ceased to exist. This time there could be no illusion in face of the omnipresent power of Rome. Yet sixty years later, in the reign of Hadrian, the fierce spirit of Jewish nationality flared up once more, and it was still possible for Akiba, one of the most eminent of the Rabbis, to hail Simon bar Cochba as the 'Star out of Jacob', foretold in the prophecy of Balaam. But the last of the Messiahs and the Rabbi who gave him his blessing perished, with hundreds of thousands of the populace, in the hopeless struggle (A. D. 135). The wiser spiritual leaders of the people, recognizing the realities of the situation, proceeded quietly to adapt the old faith to the new conditions. 'Zion hath been taken from us', says the Apocalypse of Baruch, 'and we have nothing now save the Mighty One and His law'.[1]

We have seen the place which the Law held in Jewish religion since the time of Ezra. The idea of the divine Law, committed as a sacred trust to Israel in the midst of an alien world, became henceforth more than ever the inspiration of Jewish piety. Looking at it from the outside, we are apt, thinking of the Law, to have in mind the mass of ceremonial obligations, or again, under the influence of St. Paul's antithesis in the Epistle to the Romans, we may think of it as a burden too heavy to be borne, because demanding a righteousness impossible of attainment. But this is very far from the aspect which the Law wears to the pious Jew. As Mr. Montefiore says, speaking from the inside, 'the great majority of the Jewish evidence goes to show that, from the end of the first century at any rate, the laws were not a burden but a delight. . . . To the typical and even to the average Jew, the Law was a joy for which he could thank God in sincerity

[1] Cf. F. C. Burkitt, *Jewish and Christian Apocalypses*, p. 8.

and truth. . . . In spite of [his] failures he can feel the Law to be a privilege and not a burden; not a gloom but a joy.'[1] Or as Professor Moore sums it up: 'The Law is the signal proof of God's peculiar love to Israel. . . . Love for the Law and devotion to its study and observance, pride in the Law as the wisest and best in the world, gratitude to God for the gift of the Law—this is the prevailing note [of Judaism] in all periods.'[2]

But while we recognize all this—and can understand therefore the satisfaction of the Jew with his inherited religion—we cannot but feel at the same time that, in thus accepting and emphasizing the national character of its religion, Judaism in the second century A.D. executed a retreat. It surrendered the universalistic hope which inspired the Second Isaiah and which had found expression subsequently in the missionary activities that resulted in so considerable a body of proselytes during the Hellenistic period. Its monotheism might fit it to be a universal religion, but history conspired to prevent the religion of Israel from itself filling that role. The sense of being a peculiar people was too deeply implanted in the race. Hence, however friendly the welcome accorded to proselytes, these still remained in the outer court; if they were exempted from certain requirements of the Law, the very exemption was a badge, as it were, of inferior status. 'They had less obligations,' says Mr. Montefiore, 'but also less privileges.' They were not, in short, of the blood. Again, the friendly relations which tended to grow up between Jews and Gentiles under the Persians and during the early Hellenistic period had been rudely shattered by the savage onslaught of Antiochus upon their religion. The large-hearted inclusiveness of the Second Isaiah gives place, in the age of the Maccabees and afterwards, to a passionate sense of difference from all the world

[1] *Judaism and St. Paul*, pp. 32, 34, 42.
[2] *History of Religions*, ii. 69.

beside. In apocalyptic visions of the End, the Gentiles appear only as the enemies of God and food for his vengeance. The subsequent experiences of the Jews at the hands of the Romans intensified this feeling of hostility and utter separation. 'The author of the apocalyptic 4th Book of Esdras, in his dialogue with the Lord about the ways of providence, gives up the whole question of the heathen as an impossibly hopeless puzzle.'[1] 'Touching men in general,' he says, 'Thou knowest best, but touching Thy people, I will speak.' Proselytes were not unknown even as late as A.D. 300, and later, if we may judge from the edicts issued after the Roman Empire became Christian, forbidding any one under severe penalties to become a proselyte to Judaism. But, as Mr. Montefiore says, 'the desire and search for proselytes had ceased';[2] Judaism had entrenched itself as the religion of a race. Yet it was a Jew who proclaimed from Mars' Hill the God 'who dwelleth not in temples made with hands . . . and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth'.[3] The spiritual monotheism of Israel was to become the heritage of the civilized world. Speaking for 'liberal and modern Jews', Mr. Montefiore acknowledges that Judaism could not become a universal religion together with its inviolate Law. 'We do not for a moment ignore', he says, 'the traces of universalism and the many universalistic sayings in Rabbinic literature: still less do we ignore the movement and the leanings towards universalism in Hellenistic Judaism. But we perceive that actually and historically, and in the *fullest* sense theoretically and verbally, universalism was never preached and practised up till Paul's day, as it was preached and practised by him.'[4]

[1] Montefiore, *op. cit.*, p. 110.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 55.
[3] Acts xvii. 26–7.
[4] *Op cit.*, p. 144.

CHAPTER X
ZOROASTRIANISM

The apparent self-containedness of Hebrew religion is no doubt partly due to the fact that the Old Testament was for so long the only record of the development to which we had access. In that record the political and religious history of the nation is told by writers who, consciously or unconsciously, project into the past the pure monotheism and the humanitarian ethics which were the fruit of the Prophetic movement. Intensely conscious of their position as a peculiar people, their religion naturally seems to them a thing apart, a special Divine revelation, offering no point of contact with the beliefs of surrounding nations. The national history was written, accordingly, throughout from this standpoint and in a religious interest. The historical part of the Old Testament was written, not by trained historians for history's sake, but, just as much as the other canonical books, with a view to edification. The broad contrast between sacred and profane history thus established persisted in many quarters till a comparatively recent date, and the impression thereby produced is to a considerable extent illusory. There were many resemblances between the pre-Prophetic religion of Israel and the cults of the neighbouring Semitic peoples. On the other hand, elevated conceptions of deity, accompanied by genuine religious feeling and important ethical and social ideas, are not wanting in the older civilizations of Egypt and Mesopotamia.

It is a matter of common knowledge that Ikhnaton sought to impose a monotheistic creed and worship upon Egypt in the fourteenth century B.C.; and although his successor, under the influence of the priesthood, reverted to the traditional worship of Amon-Ré, the two centuries which follow are described by Professor Breasted as 'the age of personal piety'; and the language in which Amon is addressed in the hymns and votive inscriptions of the period

retain a strong monotheistic flavour. The beneficent care for all his creatures which the heretic King had celebrated in Aton is similarly attributed to the older deity:

> Ré, Lord of Truth,
> Whose sanctuary is hidden, Lord of gods,
> Who commanded and the gods became,
> Atum who made the people. . . .
> Who distinguished one race from another,
> Who hears the prayer of him who is in captivity,
> Who is kindly of heart when one calls upon him.

Again and again Amon is addressed as the God 'who cometh to the silent, who saveth the poor', who is 'as a herdsman leading the herds to pasture and herding him that leans upon him'.[1] Much the same is true of the Mesopotamian empires and their religious systems. The stone tablet on which Hammurabi's famous Code of Laws is inscribed depicts the monarch as receiving the laws from the hands of the Sun-god, just as in the Old Testament the various Pentateuchal codes are represented as directly instituted by Yahweh. Compiled about 2090 B. C., this code was appealed to as late as the seventh century B. C. as 'The Judgements of Righteousness which Hammurabi, the great King, set up'; and the king himself declares at its close that one of his lifelong aims had been to restrain the strong from oppressing the weak and to procure justice for the orphan and the widow.

The Babylonian pantheon was a large one, as the older cities, formerly the seats of independent dynasties, had each their tutelary deity. But when Babylon became the centre of a great empire, Marduk or Merodach, the tutelary deity of the imperial city, was naturally assigned the same pre-eminence in the state-religion. In an epic fragment we learn how he received all 'the fifty names of the great gods' and wielded therefore all

[1] Breasted, *Development of Religious Thought in Ancient Egypt*, pp. 346–55.

their powers. He became at the same time the glorified figure of the ideal king, whose judgement and whose mercy are alike celebrated in the hymns and prayers addressed to him. With the rise of the Assyrian Empire the place of Marduk was taken by Asshur, the national god of the conquering race; and although Asshur was, like Yahweh, a man of war and a jealous god, he presented other aspects to his faithful worshippers. The fact has been commented on by Professor Sayce[1] and others, that the cult of Asshur was an imageless worship, the god being represented, not in human form, but only by the solar symbol of the winged disk, implying thus a more spiritual conception of the Divine. In Asshur, Professor Sayce concludes, 'we can in fact trace all the lineaments upon which, under other circumstances, there might have been built up as pure a faith as that of the God of Israel'. In the end, however, both in Egypt and in Babylon, religion may be said to have been strangled by magic.

There is no evidence, however, to show that the religious development of Israel owed anything of importance to either of its mighty neighbours. The tribal monotheism from which it started was common to it with other branches of the Semitic family. For the transfiguration of this semi-barbarous creed into an ethical monotheism, at once sublime and tender, the only explanation required is the profound originality of the Hebrew Prophets. The purer faith was the fruit of Israel's own religious experience. And not least remarkable in that aspect are the circumstances in which the Prophets reached their supreme convictions. 'In the Ancient East,' says Professor Breasted, 'monotheism was but imperialism in religion.'[2] Universalism, he explains in the context, first arose in Egypt as a reflection of the world-empire founded by the Pharaohs of the eighteenth dynasty. And the same might be said

[1] *Religions of Ancient Egypt and Babylon*, pp. 367–72.
[2] *Cambridge Ancient History*, ii. 111.

with truth of such approaches to monotheism as we find in Babylon and Assyria. But it was precisely in the darkest hour of the national fortunes that the Prophets of Israel instilled into their fellow countrymen the conception of Yahweh as the one all-righteous Ruler of the world.

But if the influence of Egypt and Babylon upon the religious thought of Israel is negligible, the circumstances are somewhat different in the case of the Persian Empire, of which Palestine was a province for more than 200 years —from the fall of Babylon in 539 to the conquest of the East by Alexander the Great. Not, of course, that there can be any question of formative influence upon fundamental doctrine at so late a date. In the Prophet of the Exile the religion of Israel may be said to have already found its highest expression. But the Jews now for the first time came in contact with a religion which in important respects bore a striking resemblance to their own. For, in spite of the dualism which figures historically as the distinctive feature of Zoroastrianism, the ultimate triumph of the Truth over the Lie implies the actual primacy of the former, and the worship of Ahuramazda has the essential features of a lofty monotheism. Both religions were entirely ethical in spirit; as Kuenen says, they were more like each other than any other two religions in antiquity.[1] The resemblances and the differences were alike such as to stimulate interest and provoke reflection; and, as we shall see in the sequel, various features of post-exilic Judaism may reasonably be attributed to the interchange of ideas during that period. But the religion of Zoroaster has a significance in the religious history of the world which goes far beyond any specific traces of its influence upon later Judaism. Although in the conception of its founder it may be ultimately monotheistic, it is far from being a simple duplicate of Hebrew thought. It is speculative on a cosmic scale, in

[1] *Religion of Israel*, iii. 33.

a sense in which Hebrew thought is not; and the bolder handling of the problem of evil gives it a place of its own among the religious systems of the world. The attitude it represents is distinctive and typical. It demands, therefore, an independent statement, were it only in view of the influence which Zoroastrianism, under a variety of names, has exerted on subsequent thought even down to the present day.

The date of Zoroaster (or, in old Persian, Zarathustra) has been the subject of much controversy. A tradition of some antiquity places his birth in the year 660 B.C., but the details of the chronology by which this date is arrived at are not very convincing. The archaic language and metre of the Gathas, the oldest portion of the sacred scriptures contained in the Avesta, and the fact that the Zoroastrian faith was firmly established in the time of Darius I seem both to point to an earlier date. Eduard Meyer and Duncker suggest a date about 1000 B.C., and Geldner also regards some such date as possible. Others would carry him back as far as the fourteenth century B.C., but nothing can be definitely determined. There is some evidence that he was a native of Media, but it is tolerably certain that his activity as a teacher must be placed in Eastern Iran—in Parthia or in Bactria—and that the new religion spread from there towards the west. In the later sections of the Avesta all kinds of myths and marvels have gathered round the birth and career of the prophet; but in the Gathas he appears as an entirely human character, proclaiming, in the face of indifference and opposition, the new truth which he regards as a message given him by God. 'At one time hope, at another despondency, now assured confidence, now doubt and despair, here a firm faith in the speedy coming of the kingdom of heaven, there the thought of taking refuge by flight—such is the range of emotions which find their immediate expression in those hymns.' [1]

[1] Geldner, *E. B.*, 11th edition, xxviii. 1040 B.

The nature of the new faith may be best understood by reference to the *milieu* in which it arose. Herodotus thus describes the popular religion of the Persians as he found it in the fifth century B. C.—'They hold it unlawful to set up images and shrines and altars. . . . Their custom is to ascend to the highest peaks of the mountains and offer sacrifices to Zeus, calling the whole vault of the sky Zeus; and they sacrifice also to Sun, Moon, Earth, Fire, Water, and Winds.' He does not mention Zoroaster's name and the account contains no reference to his characteristic doctrines. The description really applies to the old Aryan nature-worship as we find it in the Rig-Veda. Varuna, the sky god, was the original head of the Indian pantheon, and the old Persian religion closely resembled that of their eastern kinsmen. Zarathustra's teaching was essentially a revolt against this polytheistic nature-worship, and involved a complete ethicizing of religious belief. But we may infer from Herodotus' statement that the older worship of the elemental powers had either maintained itself continuously among the masses of the population, or had at least reinvaded and temporarily displaced the purer faith. The nature of Zarathustra's reform is suggestively illustrated by the complete reversal of meaning which the old Sanskrit word 'deva' undergoes in the Gathas. *Deva* in the Rig-Veda is the most general word for 'god'; in the Avesta, *daeva* means evil spirit or demon. A parallel change in an opposite direction is observable in the word *asura*. In the Rig-Veda *asura* is a term used of certain gods, notably of Varuna, implying special dignity; hence in the Persian form *Ahura* it is employed, with the additional epithet 'mazda' or wise, to designate the supreme and only God of the Zoroastrian faith—Ahura-mazda, the Wise Lord. In India, on the contrary, *asura* came to be applied in the later literature only to evil spirits. Originally, as Geldner explains,

'*Asura* indicates the more sublime and awful divine character, for

which man entertains the greater reverence and fear. *Daeva* denotes the kind gods of light, the vulgar—more sensuous and anthropomorphic—deities. This twofold development of the idea of God formed the point of leverage for Zoroaster's reformation. While in India the conception of the *asura* had veered more and more towards the dreadful and the dreaded, Zoroaster elevated it again—at the cost indeed of the *daevas* whom he degraded to the rank of malicious powers and devils. In one *Asura*, whose Aryan original was Varuna, he concentrated the whole of the divine character, and conferred upon it the epithet of "the wise" (Mazda). This culminating stage in the Asura conception is the work of Zoroaster.' [1]

No other god except Ahuramazda is mentioned in the Gathas, and he is represented as the only object of worship, 'the creator of the world and all that therein is. He knows all that men do; his eyes behold their secret deeds as well as those done in open day; he knows all that is and is to be. He requites men for their deeds in this world and the other.' [2] In this sense Zoroastrianism is pronouncedly monotheistic; and even if the name Ahuramazda was in use before Zoroaster's time,[3] the exclusive position assigned to him and the relegation of all other so-called deities to the category of evil spirits, deceivers of mankind, must clearly be traced to the prophet himself. It is obviously the work of a strong and fully conscious reforming spirit; and, as Eduard Meyer points out,[4] this solitary thinker seems to reach at a stroke a universalism as wide as, if not wider than, that of the most catholic of the Hebrew prophets. Ahuramazda is no tribal god, whose sphere of action is subsequently extended: he is proclaimed from the first as universal Lord, and Zarathustra's message is to the individual man as such. Be he Aryan or be he Turanian, he is called to the service of the true God. Zarathustra implores Ahuramazda to enlighten him as to

[1] *E. B.*, 11th ed., xxviii. 1041 B. [2] Moore, *op. cit.* i. 368.
[3] As Moulton contends, *Early Zoroastrianism*, p. 81.
[4] *Ursprung and Anfänge des Christenthums*, ii. 59.

the doctrine of the faith that he 'may convert all living men: with the tongue of thy mouth do thou speak it, that I may make all the living believers'.[1]

Ahuramazda is conceived by Zoroaster in purely ethical terms, the impersonation and the vindicator of moral righteousness, the author and maintainer of the moral order of the universe. Hence the acceptable service to be rendered him is obedience to his precepts, a life conformable to this divine order, personal righteousness in thought and word and deed.[2] The emphasis is the same as in the Hebrew prophets, and the Gathas are almost silent on the subject of ceremonial worship. But the very intensity of the ethical conviction at the root of the prophet's creed leads directly to the dualism which became historically its distinctive characteristic; for, however deeply laid the foundations of the moral order may be, honesty compels the admission that that order is far from perfectly realized in the world as we know it. Rather must we say that life is everywhere a battle-ground between right and wrong, Good and Evil, Truth and 'the Lie'. *Asha*, the right order, the truth, and *Druj*, the Lie, are perhaps the favourite terms in which Zoroaster sums up the great antithesis. The basal fact of the world is the struggle between these two principles; and for man—for each individual man—the fateful decision is on which side he shall enlist in the cosmic war. The conflict has been in progress from the foundation of the world; over against Ahuramazda or Ormuzd stands from the beginning Angra Mainyu or Ahriman, the enemy, the spirit at enmity with all that is good or holy. Round Ahuramazda are ranged, as ministers of his will, 'the immortal holy ones' (Amesha Spentas), transparent personifications, for the most part,

[1] Yasna, 31. 3.

[2] 'The triad of Thought, Word, Deed, is perpetual in the Gathas, and holds its own throughout the history of Zoroastrianism' (Moulton, *Early Zoroastrianism*, p. 142).

of the divine attributes, while Ahriman is conceived as the leader of a host of evil spirits, comprehensively known as *daevas*, false gods or demons.[1] So the opposition is represented in the later systematized Zoroastrian theology, where the two spirits appear as two independently creative gods and Ahriman is regarded as actually the creator, not only of the demons, but of all that is bad in the natural world—noxious animals and insects, diseases, and the destructive forces of nature generally. But, as Professor Moore expresses it, this is to transform the ethical dualism of the Gathas into a hard and fast 'theological dualism' of a decidedly mechanical description. In the Gathas, as already indicated, there is no such even balance of the two opposing forces; the position is rather one with which we are sufficiently familiar in Christian thought. The position of Ahuramazda is supreme; he alone is hailed as 'Mazda, creator of all things through the holy spirit—who determined the path of sun and stars, by whom the moon waxes and wanes again . . . who upheld the earth beneath and the firmament from falling.'[2] The later dualism is 'an attempt to account for the evil of the present world, physical as well as moral, upon the premises of an ethical theism, which cannot admit that God is the author of any kind of evil'.[3] But the dualism is temporary, an episode in the world-history, which is destined to terminate in the complete triumph of Ahuramazda's righteous will. The ultimate metaphysical questions raised by the presence of evil in a divinely created world were perhaps hardly consciously present to Zoroaster's mind. When the dualism became more accentuated in later versions of the creed, sects arose, like the Zervanites, who sought to rise above it to a higher

[1] For Zoroaster himself, the *daevas* were primarily the false gods of popular belief and of the Turanian nomads; but the name was extended later to mean evil spirits generally, conceived as an innumerable company.

[2] Yasna, 44.

[3] Moore, i. 405.

unity by representing Ormuzd and Ahriman as the twin offspring of an ultimate principle, limitless time. But such barren scholasticism can have brought comfort to few.

In dealing practically with the question of evil, stress is laid in the Gathas on the fact of human freedom. Man has been created by Mazda, who has endowed him with intelligence and left him therefore free, so that each 'according to his own will can frame his confession' (Yasna, 31. 11). It is for him personally to choose under which banner he will serve, whether he will be a follower of Right or a follower of the Lie, and on his choice depends his future destiny. But, inasmuch as men are ignorant and easily misled, Ahuramazda in his goodness has sent a prophet to proclaim to them the way of salvation. As such a prophet Zarathustra announces himself. He is conscious of a divine call, and the Gathas frequently take the form of a colloquy between himself and Mazda. The older Gathas, as they have come down to us, consist of little more than reiterated assurances of the moral order of the universe and the inevitable reckoning which accordingly awaits the followers of the Lie,[1] together with prophetic intimations of the great consummation—the 'goal' or 'fulfilment', the day of recompensings, the final Judgement—when the Right shall smite the Lie (Yasna, 40. 1) and God (in the language of the New Testament Apocalypse) shall take unto himself his great power and reign. 'The Kingdom' is Zarathustra's standing designation for the culminating phase of the world-history thus to be inaugurated, and he appears to have regarded its coming as imminent. In one of the verses Ahuramazda is represented as commanding him to make haste to deliver his message

[1] 'Of these two things will I speak, the ill that is threatened to the Liar and the happiness that clings to the Right' (Yasna, 51. 8) Cf. Yasna, 43. 5: 'As the Holy One I recognized thee, Mazda Ahura, when I saw thee in the beginning at the birth of Life, *when thou madest actions and words to have their meed*—evil for the evil and a good destiny for the good—through thy wisdom, when creation shall reach its goal.'

in view of the near approach of the end: 'Speed thee, ere my Obedience come, followed by treasure-laden Destiny, who shall render to men severally the destinies of the twofold award' (Yasna, 43. 12).

We meet already in these ancient verses the figures of the Bridge of the Separator, to be crossed after death, and of the ordeal by fire (or rather by a flood of molten metal) at the final Judgement. Both these figures are retained and elaborated in the later Avesta theology. In the later texts the Cinvat bridge is described as stretching from the summit of Mount Elburz to the mount of Judgement, spanning the abyss of hell. To the righteous it appears to be nine spears' length broad, but to the wicked man as narrow as a razor's edge, so that he pitches headlong into the gulf below. This refers to the judgement of the individual after death. The other figure portrays the end of the world. After due punishment has been meted out to the wicked, fire (the sacred element and symbol) will melt the metal in the mountains, till it flows over the whole earth like a purifying stream. For the righteous it will be like walking in warm milk; for the wicked it will be molten metal, but in its stream they will be finally purged of their wickedness. All evil thus done away with, the reign of God will begin, never again to be disturbed.

The strenuous ethical attitude throughout is unmistakable. But in spite of the emphasis upon the ideas of guilt and punishment, in spite of the prominence given to a life after death as the scene of retribution—in spite, too, of the teaching of the approaching close of the present order of things—the temper of Zoroastrian religion is far from being 'other-worldly', in the sense in which these words might be applied, for example, to medieval Christian piety. Nor was there anything mystical or ascetic in Zarathustra's message. The virtues he inculcated were the homely virtues of everyday life. The good life was for him that of the husbandman and the industrious tiller of the

soil. In one of the opening sections of the Gathas (Yasna, 29), which describes the Calling of the prophet, it is in answer to the soul of the Kine, beseeching Ahura for a protector, that the latter names Zarathustra for that office. The soul of the Kine, representing the settled agricultural population of the land, laments the constant raids to which they are exposed from the nomad tribes on the edge of the desert—worshippers of the *daevas*—who devastate their lands and slaughter their cattle, their most precious possession. In the Gathas the enemies of Ahuramazda, the followers of the Lie, are primarily these semi-barbarous Turanian tribesmen, who were a constant menace to the agricultural civilization of the Iranian settlers. The praise of agriculture is writ large throughout the Avesta scriptures; the 'right-living' and 'the cattle-tender' are in a manner equated in the section of the Gathas referred to. In another section (31. 9. 10) Mazda is addressed as 'the creator of the Kine', and 'the cattle-tending borderman' is 'the man that advances Good Thought'. The same spirit pervades the later Avesta: 'O maker of the material world, thou Holy One, who is it that rejoices the earth with greatest joy?' Ahuramazda answers: 'It is he who cultivates most corn, grass and fruit, who waters ground that is dry, or dries ground that is too wet. . . . What is the food that fills the law of Mazda? It is sowing corn again and again. He who sows corn sows holiness; he makes the law of Mazda grow higher and higher.'[1] Asceticism has naturally no place in such a context: 'Thus let the priest teach the people the holy saying: No one who does not eat has strength to do works of holiness, strength to do works of husbandry, strength to beget children. By eating, every material creature lives, by not eating it dies away.'[2]

[1] Vendidad, iii. 23–31. The whole section proceeds in a similar spirit.

[2] This particular passage, however, has rather the air of a later gloss, a piece of contemporary polemic—perhaps against the Manichees, as suggested by Darmesteter in the case of a similar passage, iv. 47.

The worshipper of Ahuramazda stands, therefore, with his feet on the solid earth. The religion is throughout active and practical, in marked contrast to the passive and contemplative development of the old Aryan religion in India. The emphasis laid on the evil principle is far from inducing a pessimistic temper; evil is there to be fought, and the final victory is certain. Indian thought tends to pessimism, treating the visible world as an illusion, birth as a curse, and the cessation of individual existence as the only goal worth striving for. But to the Zoroastrian —although he also believes that the fashion of this world passeth away—the present world is a very real place, for in it the battle has to be fought, and through man the fight has to be won. Each man by his individual action may have a part in beating down the forces of the enemy and hastening the consummation. The ancient Persians, says Herodotus, regarded a man's birthday as the day of all others which they should honour most. Zoroastrianism, if it was not the first expression of that spirit, at least did nothing to impair it.

The religion of Cyrus, the founder of the Persian Empire, is matter of uncertainty, although the Biblical references to him are favourable to the idea that he professed a monotheistic or quasi-monotheistic creed. But the inscriptions of Darius I (521–486), who no less than forty-one times ascribes his empire and his successes to 'the grace or will of Ahuramazda'[1], may be accepted as evidence that Zoroastrianism had by that time established itself as in some sense the official religion of the Empire. About a century later, however, Artaxerxes Mnemon (402–364) names Mithra and Anahita (a goddess of fertility) by the side of Ahuramazda; and Ochus his successor

[1] 'Ahuramazda who created this earth and that heaven, who created man and man's dwelling place, who made Darius king, the one and only king of many'. (Given by Geldner in his article on the Persian language in *E. B.*, 11th edition, xxi. p. 247 B).

similarly prays: 'May Ahuramazda and Mithra protect me and this land.' The worship of the old Aryan nature-gods, probably never extinct among the people, is thus seen reasserting itself, and tending to supplant the pure Zoroastrian faith. In the later Avesta there are hymns to both the deities mentioned as well as to many others, some of them derived from the old mythology, others personified attributes and qualities drawn from the original Zoroastrian texts. One of the longest of these liturgical chants is addressed to 'Mithra, the lord of wide pastures, who has a thousand ears, ten thousand eyes'.[1] Appearances are saved by an introductory statement, acknowledging the creation of Mithra by the supreme Lord: 'Ahura Mazda spake unto Spitama Zarathustra saying: Verily when I created Mithra, the lord of wide pastures, O Spitama, I created him as worthy of sacrifice, as worthy of prayer, as myself, Ahura Mazda.' In Strabo's time there were Zoroastrian temples in Cappadocia, 'where the Magian tribe is numerous'—shrines, as he calls them, of the Persian gods, and among them temples to Anahita and Omanus, 'and an image of Omanus goes in procession'. 'These things', he adds, 'I have seen myself.'[2] Omanus is none other than Vohu Mano, Good Thought or Benevolent Mind,[3] the leading attribute of Ahuramazda as Creator. So irresistible in antiquity was the polytheistic instinct. The career of Mithra as an independent deity is, of course, one of the most interesting chapters in the history of religion. His temporary inclusion in the Zoroastrian theology was but one phase of the story. His presence there is radically inconsistent with the thought of the founder.

The history of Zoroastrianism in the centuries following

[1] Mihir Yast, *S. B. E.*, xxiii, pp. 119–58.

[2] Strabo, xv. 3. 13. (Moulton, *op. cit.* 408–9.)

[3] So translated by Moulton. Moore, translating simply Good Mind, suggests a comparison with Wisdom in the Old Testament.

the fall of the Persian Empire is obscure, but under the native dynasty of the Sassanians (A.D. 224–650) Persia again became an independent and powerful kingdom, and Zoroastrianism was firmly entrenched as the national religion, a position which it held till the Arab conquest and the establishment of Moslem rule in the seventh century. The first Sassanian monarch ordered the preparation of an authoritative canon, and the Avesta, as we possess it, represents, with the exception of the Gathas, the religion as systematized by the Magian priesthood early in the third century A.D. What has come down to us, however, is a mere fraction—perhaps a twentieth—of the collection then made: but the contents of the lost books may be partly gathered, in summary, from the Bundahish, a rendering of the older scriptures (the language of which had become unintelligible) into Pahlavi or Middle Persian, made in the ninth century A.D. The fact that these translations were made—and they survive in many manuscripts—is proof of the continued vitality of the religion in certain circles at that time. But it has been displaced by Mohammedanism in Persia, itself, and its only representatives are now the Parsee community in Bombay.

Besides the concessions to polytheistic sentiment just mentioned, we find in the later Avesta that the broadly ethical religion of the founder has undergone a legalistic development, very similar to that which took place in the case of Judaism as compared with the religion of the Prophets. The stress is laid on ritual correctness and ceremonial purity. 'The exact performance of the rite and the exact recitation of the long texts in a dead language is the essential thing; so done it is sure to be efficacious. It not only procures blessings from the gods but reinforces the gods and gives them power to overcome hostile influences. . . . Here, as in many other religions, primitive notions of the magical efficacy of the cultus,

which seem for a time to be overcome in the development of the idea of the supreme power and goodness of God and the ethical nature of religion, come back and entrench themselves impregnably in the ritual.'[1] The ideas of ceremonial purity and defilement—cleanness and uncleanness—tend also to thrust the simple requirements of morality into the background. The Vendidad, one of the longest sections of the Avestan canon, consists almost entirely of an elaborate enumeration of the various actions, voluntary or involuntary, by which a man may contract uncleanness, accompanied by minute regulations for the purification of the offender. To pass from the Gathas to the Vendidad, it has been said, is like passing in the Old Testament from the Prophets to Leviticus. There was also an elaborate scale of penances by which (with the exception of a few inexpiable sins) any specific offence might be expiated. The reckoning was commonly in terms of stripes with a horsewhip, ranging from five stripes for minor offences, up to ten thousand for exceptionally heinous cases. But as the penances in some cases took the form of work useful to the community (irrigation, for example, or bridge-building) or the provision of materials for worship, it may be that the reckoning by stripes was symbolical, and the atonement was really made in the shape of fines paid to the priests. In many cases the external and legalistic attitude adopted is out of harmony with deeper moral feeling and leaves no place for the sense of 'sin', which, however morbid its expressions may often be, must be regarded as a genuine feature of religious experience.[2]

[1] Moore, i. 390.

[2] 'La saine et lumineuse confiance en la puissance du bien et en sa victoire se mêle, dans le mazdéisme, à une conception assez superficielle de la gravité du péché et du mal de la vie. Et là se trouve un des raisons pour lesquelles Zarathustra n'a jamais conquis le monde comme Gautama Boudha. Son enseignement est en majeur du commencement jusqu'à la fin. Il manque de ces quelques accords profonds en mineur qui interprètent l'expérience du cœur et ses aspirations. On peut appliquer à la doctrine du salut mazdienne les paroles d'Anselme: *Nondum considerasti*

A similar want of depth and inwardness is observable in the account of the judgement at the Bridge on the fourth morning after death. There is undoubtedly something fine—as well as profoundly true—in the principle that 'the course of inexorable law cannot be turned aside by any sacrifice and offering, not even by the free grace of God'[1], but there is something painfully mechanical in the balancing of good and evil deeds in the heavenly ledger. If the individual has a surplus of good works in his favour, he passes into paradise; but if his evil deeds outweigh his good, hell is his portion. In the Pahlavi texts provision is also made for those in whose case the evil deeds and the good are precisely balanced. Such souls remain in an intermediate state of existence till the final Judgement of the world.[2]

The final Judgement and the End of the world, which Zarathustra had spoken of as impending, is relegated by the later theology to a date two thousand years after his time. Theopompus (in the fourth century B.C.) tells us[3] that 'according to the Magi, for three thousand years in succession one of these gods [Oromazes and Areimanios] rules, and the other is ruled; for the next three thousand they fight and war and break up one another's domains; but finally Hades [i.e. Areimanios] is to fail, and men will become happy, neither needing food nor casting shadows'. This is not quite exact. The cycle, as it appears in the Bundahish, was really a world-year of twelve thousand years, divided into four successive periods of three thousand years each. 'At the beginning Ahuramazda produced his spiritual creation, and his creatures remained for three thousand years with intangible bodies free from

quanti ponderis sit peccatum.' Söderblom, *La Vie future d'après le mazdéisme*, p. 292.

[1] Geldner, *E. B.*, 11th edition, xxviii. 1042 B.

[2] The same computation of separate items and the same use of the idea of acquiring merit are characteristic, it may be noted, of Indian religion.

[3] As reported by Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride*, cc. 46 f.

corruption. The second period is the period of material creation. In the third, Angra Mainyu breaks into the creation of God and causes the greatest distress; that is the age of human history prior to the revelation of the true religion. At the beginning of the fourth period (Anno Mundi 9000) Zoroaster appears: at its close will be the last judgement.'[1] Then the Saviour or Deliverer (Saosyant or Shaoshyant) will appear, born miraculously of Zoroaster's seed, the dead will be raised and assume their resurrection bodies, and the Great Assize will proceed as already described. 'Areimanios', as Theopompus puts it, 'is made to vanish away, and the earth having become flat and level, men shall have one life and one commonwealth, all being blessed and speaking with one tongue.'

[1] Moore, *op. cit.*, i. 384.

CHAPTER XI

PERSIAN INFLUENCES: JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN APOCALYPTIC

It is difficult to estimate and easy to exaggerate the extent of foreign influence upon post-exilic Judaism. The rise and spread of a belief in immortality, for example, so characteristic of the period in question, is often ascribed to Persian influence; but much here may doubtless be explained as the natural outcome of the deepened religious experience of the Jewish people themselves. We see the idea of a future life as one of continued individual communion with Yahweh taking shape in some of the Psalms.[1] The idea of rewards and punishments in another life offered itself also as a solution of the ethical anomalies of the present world, to which Jewish thought had been tardily but inevitably awakened. In many of the Psalms, in the Book of Job, in Ezekiel, the presence of such difficulties is reflected. Only by judgement and retribution after death, it would seem, can the divine justice and the moral government of the world be vindicated. Even here, however, when we consider the close relations into which the Jews were brought with the Persians during the Exile and afterwards, it is difficult to suppose that the change of outlook in popular belief was not accelerated, and the form of new beliefs partly shaped, by contact with a religion in which the resurrection of the dead and a final Judgement of all men held so central a place. Of course in this, as in other instances, the process is to be conceived, not as a conscious borrowing of specific doctrines from another religious system, but rather as the gradual and largely unconscious infiltration of new ideas from a friendly environment. We have to remember in this connexion that the great majority of the deported Jews remained in Babylonia for eighty years after the edict of Cyrus, and

[1] Cf. *Idea of Immortality*, pp. 17–19.

large numbers stayed behind even after the more complete resettlement under Ezra and Nehemiah. In that region Jews and Persians were necessarily in the closest contact, and, as the Babylonian Jews were in constant communication with their brethren in Judaea, any influence exerted by Persian ideas tended to make itself felt in the Jewish nation as a whole.

In one direction the influence of Persian ideas during the period mentioned is clearly marked, namely on the Jewish doctrine of angels and demons, and in particular on the conception of Satan. Angels or 'messengers' of Yahweh are mentioned from time to time in the older documents of the Old Testament. But they have no definite personality; they are simply ministers of Yahweh's will, executors of his purposes, e. g. in the sending of a pestilence or the infliction of other judgements. In much the same sense one of the Psalmists (Ps. civ. 4) represents all natural forces as subservient to the divine behest: 'He maketh his messengers winds, his ministers a flaming fire.' Or, again, 'the angel of Yahweh' appears to Moses in 'a flame of fire out of the middle of a bush'; but two verses further on it is Yahweh who calls, 'out of the midst of the bush', and 'Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God'. Here, as in many other passages, the angel of Yahweh is only a figurative or more decorous way of referring to Yahweh himself: no distinction is drawn between the two. When Yahweh is represented in kingly state, as in the ecstatic vision of some of the prophets, or in the poetic imagery of the Psalms, angels appear collectively surrounding his throne 'in the form of an assembly or privy council of holy ones', or, again, as his army when he descends to do battle with his enemies. 'I saw Yahweh sitting on his throne', says Micaiah to Ahab, 'and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left.'[1] But, as criticism warns us, the whole conception 'belongs

[1] 1 Kings xxii. 19.

rather to the delineation of the majesty of God in poetry and prophecy',[1] and, like the idea of the throne and the palace, must not be taken with too prosaic literalness. In any case, angels are not differentiated from one another by individual qualities before the Exile; they are hardly conceived as independent personalities at all. But in the centuries that followed a rapid development sets in. Distinctions of rank begin to appear—angels and archangels —and the chief angels are known by their proper names: Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Phanuel, Uriel, &c. In the Book of Daniel, Gabriel is introduced as the interpreter of one of the visions, and the nations have their angelic 'princes' or champions. The 'prince of the Kingdom of Persia' and the 'prince of Greece' are mentioned as contending with one another. 'Michael one of the great princes' appears as the special guardian of Israel's interests.[2] In the Book of Tobit, Raphael, who guides young Tobias to his kinsman's house in Media, describes himself as 'one of the seven holy angels, which present the prayers of the saints, and which go in and out before the glory of the Holy One'. In the Apocalypses that followed there was a luxuriant growth of speculation on the origin, the activities and the final destiny of angels, both good and bad.

It is in respect of the latter that the changed point of view is specially noteworthy. In the early religion of Israel angels or demons, as powers of evil, practically do not appear at all, save as isolated survivals of primitive heathen beliefs. All the happenings of nature and providence are ascribed to the direct agency of God. 'Shall evil befall a city', says Amos, 'and Yahweh hath not done it?'[3] 'I am Yahweh', says the Second Isaiah, emphasizing the monotheistic position, 'and there is none else. I form the light and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil; I am Yahweh that doeth all these things.'[4] In the Book of

[1] Robertson Smith, article 'Angels' in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 9th edition.
[2] xii. 1. [3] Amos iii. 6. [4] Isa xlv. 6–7.

Job, which belongs to the period of the Exile or later, Satan, who was later to play such a part in Judaism and in Christianity as the adversary of God and man, still appears as one of 'the sons of God', in the *entourage* of Yahweh and an executor of his commissions. His Mephistophelian disbelief in the possibility of disinterested virtue may suggest a moral declension already in progress; but in any case the evils he brings upon Job are wrought by divine permission, and are represented throughout the poem as divine dispensations. It is just as such, indeed, that they constitute the moral problem of the drama. But the moral anomalies of the world continued in these centuries to press upon thinking minds, and with the example of the Persian dualism before their eyes, Satan came to be conceived by the Jews as 'the wicked one', a power of evil definitely opposed to Yahweh and working against him, much as Ahriman with his demons in the Persian mythology confronts Ahuramazda and the beneficent ministers of his will.[1] Jewish thinkers, it is true, never taught the coeternity of the evil principle with the good. Yahweh remains for them the sole creator, and the wicked spirits are conceived as fallen angels. But these demons or powers of evil, with Satan at their head, enjoy during the present world an amount of practical independence which enables them to inflict incalculable harm upon mankind, both by entangling them in sin and by bringing physical calamities

[1] The belief in the existence of these malignant powers permitted later writers to ascribe to Satanic agency some of the incidents which an earlier generation had had no scruple in attributing to Yahweh himself. The Book of Samuel, for example, represents Yahweh, in a fit of anger, stirring up David to number the people, and afterwards slaying seventy thousand of the people by pestilence as a punishment for the sin. But in the Book of Chronicles it is said that 'Satan stood up against Israel and moved David to number Israel'. The author of the Apocalyptic *Book of Jubilees* adopts the same method in dealing with the trial of Abraham's faith by the command to sacrifice Isaac. He represents the command as primarily an instigation of Mastema, another name for the chief of the wicked angels.

upon them. The final subjugation and punishment of these supernatural forces of evil, becomes, therefore, a leading feature in the apocalyptic visions of the time, just as in the New Testament the casting of Satan into the lake of fire and brimstone brings the Book of Revelation to a close. When the origin of evil and its chief manifestations are thus traced to a superhuman world, human history loses its independent or self-contained character and is caught up, as it were, into a vast cosmic drama. This is precisely the change which we observe in the Jewish Apocalyptic of the last pre-Christian centuries, as compared with the prophetic visions of an earlier time and their pictures of Israel's future destiny.

Apocalyptic is the most characteristic product of Palestinian Judaism in the centuries referred to, and in it is most plainly to be recognized the influence of the Zoroastrian eschatology. As far as the contents of the books are concerned, Apocalyptic might be regarded as a species of Prophecy, for they consist of elaborate predictions of the future course of events. The distinctive name is due to the literary form in which the books are cast: the future is represented as 'revealed' in a series of supernatural visions to some famous personage in the past history of the nation. This device, in turn, was the outcome of the historical situation. There was no place for prophets of the old Hebrew type in later Judaism. The pre-exilic Prophets had been men who came forward with a fresh message from Yahweh to meet some grave crisis—to check some sinister development, to emphasize some particular aspect of religious truth or of divine providence. And that was possible because in their days only the rudiments of the divine Law, if so much, had been committed to writing; in great part, it was a matter of tradition, of custom that was still in process of growth and not incapable of modification. Much, in short, was still fluid. But, from the time of Ezra, the written Law was accepted

by the leaders of the Jewish Church as the authoritative, full, and final revelation of the Divine will: it had only to be interpreted and applied to particular cases. There was no longer room, therefore, for independent representatives of God professing to deliver a direct message from Yahweh. The prophetical writings had themselves been bound up with the Law, as the second part of the inspired canon; and the prophetic canon was complete, much as we now have it, by 200 B.C. In these circumstances, therefore, any Jewish writer who believed that he had a religious message for his nation, a message of hope and encouragement, of consolation or warning, after the manner of the prophets, had to put his words into the mouth of one of the worthies of old time, if they were to carry any weight or find acceptance with the religious public. This was the form taken by the voluminous apocalyptic literature of Judaism in the second and first centuries B.C. and the first century A.D. Enoch, Noah, Solomon, Daniel, Baruch (the companion of Jeremiah), are some of the favourite names inscribed on these apocalypses. The Book of Enoch, a composite work by different authors in the second century B.C., is quoted in the Epistle of St. Jude in all good faith as the prophecy of 'Enoch, the seventh from Adam', and is referred to as inspired Scripture by Christian Fathers as late as the third century.

Prophecy and Apocalyptic have thus obviously much ground in common, and the differences become apparent only as we proceed. Both seek to interpret the past and to forecast the future, and both are called forth by some national or religious crisis. The first Apocalypses were called forth by the great assault upon Jewish religion in the time of the Maccabees, just as the Christian Apocalypse of John in the New Testament was the product, three centuries later, of the Roman persecutions under Nero and Domitian. The Prophets, as we saw in an earlier chapter, were roused by the internal state of their own

nation, on the one hand, and, on the other, by the external dangers plainly discernible to the seeing eye on the political horizon. They deal with these facts as practical statesmen; what they foretell or threaten is nothing more than the natural result of the forces at work, if allowed to go on unchecked. The prophets moreover—and this cannot be clearly enough realized—have in view throughout, even in their most glowing visions of the future, the terrestrial destiny of the Jewish nation. Almost without exception, they hold out the prospect of a happy end to Israel's troubles, conditional upon national repentance and a return to Yahweh. They paint a golden age in the future, when a righteous people shall dwell in peace and prosperity within their ancient borders. Thus Isaiah's thoughts involuntarily carry him back to such an age of agricultural simplicity and plenty: 'I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning. . . . In that day shall thy cattle feed in large pastures . . . and my people shall abide in a peaceful habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places' (Isa. i. 26; xxx. 23; xxxii. 18). But it is not to be simply a restoration of an earlier state of things, a prosperous and self-contained community at peace within their own borders. 'In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth.'[1] Actually situated at the centre of the then known world, the position of Israel is to be central and dominant. The Philistines on the west, Edom, Moab, and Ammon on the east, are to be brought into subjection.[2] 'The merchandise [of Tyre] shall be for them that dwell before Yahweh, to eat sufficiently, and for durable clothing.'[3] But the ascendency of Israel is not envisaged as conquest and oppression after the Assyrian fashion; Israel is conceived rather as central in a community of nations, which will share with her in the knowledge of the true God. 'The Egyptians shall know

[1] xix. 24. [2] xi. 14. [3] xxiii. 18.

Yahweh in that day and shall do sacrifice and oblation. . . . In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, . . . and the Egyptians shall worship with the Assyrians.'[1]

Such was the Jewish philosophy of history—a nationalistic philosophy certainly, but not an ignoble one. The consummation of the national destiny is, of course, consistently represented by the prophets as Yahweh's doing, in the sense that he is the almighty Disposer of all events; but this acknowledgement is not to be interpreted as implying some purely supernatural intervention which would supersede and dispense with all human instrumentality. On the contrary, Isaiah explicitly connects his vision of the future with a King of David's lineage who shall, with Yahweh's help, overthrow in battle the oppressor of Israel, and rule his people thereafter as Prince of Peace. A century later, Jeremiah, foretelling the triumphant return of the nation from captivity, has the same vision of 'a righteous Branch' of David's stock, who 'shall reign as King and deal wisely, and shall execute judgement and justice in the land'.[2] The ideal King in these prophecies is a purely human figure, a scion of the royal house, who is to restore the national allegiance to Yahweh, and with it the ancient glories of the kingdom. He will himself, when his time comes, go the way of all the earth, leaving a successor to carry on his work; for David, in Jeremiah's words, 'will never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel'.[3] But after the Captivity, when the status of the Jewish commonwealth in Palestine was that

[1] xix. 21, 23. This may be one of the Messianic passages inserted at a later date, in which case Isaiah's ideal would rather be that expressed in xiv. 2, that Israel 'shall take them captive, whose captives they were, and they shall rule over their oppressors'. (See note in Charles, *Eschatology, Hebrew, Jewish and Christian*, 2nd ed., p. 93, but cf. G. A. Smith's article in Hastings's *Dictionary of the Bible*, ii. 488–9.)

[2] xxiii. 5. Cf. xxxiii. 14–17.

[3] xxxiii. 17: 'The original Messianic hope', as Schürer says, did not expect an individual Messiah at all, but theocratic kings of the house of David. *The Jewish People in the time of Jesus Christ*. Division II, vol. ii, p. 159. (E.T.)

of a religious community rather than an independent nation, the figure of the Messianic king often disappears from the prophetic visions, and regenerate Israel is represented as living under the immediate sovereignty of God. The essential point to note is that, throughout the prophetic announcements of a reign or kingdom of God to be established in the future, the reference is to the earthly future of the Jewish nation, and the future of the neighbouring nations or of the world as a whole, so far as that future is involved in the destiny assigned to the chosen people. What is contemplated is simply the future course of history in that region of the world. It is just here that we note the great change in Apocalyptic literature.

The national hope of a human and conquering Messiah, revived and encouraged as it had recently been by the efforts of the Maccabaean family, was by no means extinct among the Palestinian Jews, as is sufficiently proved by the revolts against Roman power down to the time of Bar Cochba. The Zealots, of whom we read in Josephus, represented, as a party, the spirit of blind and bitter patriotism, and their following was especially strong in Galilee. But the writers of the Apocalypses look for no help from any political changes in the present order of things. The world as it now exists, they recognize, is irremediably bad; the forces of evil have gained too firm a hold upon it. In this respect their pessimism is absolute. Yet their inextinguishable confidence in the righteous government of the world, which includes for them—and often chiefly means for them—Yahweh's faithfulness to his chosen people, does but take another form. Granted that no deliverance is to be looked for through the natural evolution of events or through any human agency, then the triumph of righteousness must come through the direct intervention of God, or of some supernatural Being clothed with His authority. And such intervention will mean the catastrophic end of what they call the 'present

age', and the close of human history altogether, as it has existed hitherto on this earth.

Apocalyptic centres, therefore, in a vision of 'the last things'—'the time of the End', as the writers often call it—and the End is usually supposed to be imminent. The figures under which this culmination is described vary in the different writers. Sometimes there is most prominent the idea of a great battle in which the massed forces of evil make their final onslaught upon the people of God, but only to rush upon their doom at the hands of the Lord or his Messiah, who overthrows them either by a blast of fire—sparks and tempest proceeding out of his mouth[1]—or more simply by the mere word of his mouth.[2] The other figure is that of a great assize, the Judgement of the world which naturally follows upon the overthrow of the enemy. The two are often combined, but the judicial figure often occurs alone and becomes indeed more permanent.[3] When the time is ripe, the Ancient of Days simply appears, and, as it is said in Daniel, the Judgement is set and the books are opened. In most cases judgement is pronounced by God Himself, but in the Similitudes of Enoch the function is assigned to the Messiah, conceived there as a supernatural figure, 'the Son of Man, the Elect One, chosen and hidden with God before the creation of the world'.[4] Judgement is passed not only upon all the generations of mankind, but also

[1] 4 Ezra xiii. 10–11. [2] Psalms of Solomon, xvii. 27.

[3] Eduard Meyer sees strong evidence of Persian influence in the way in which the picture of the Judgement, as we have it in Daniel and later writers, takes the place of the conception of the Day of Yahweh in terms of military victory, devastation, and vengeance. 'Der uralte Gott, ein Greis mit mächtigem weissem Haupthaar, rein wie Wolle, in blendend weissem Gewand—wann hätte ein Jude je aus eigner Anschauung Jahveh so dargestellt?—ist kein andrer als Ahuramazda.' (Ursprung and Anfänge des Christenthums, ii. 199.)

[4] Quoted by Charles, *Between the Old and the New Testaments*, pp. 85–7. Cf. Schürer, *op. cit.*, Division III, vol. ii, pp. 161–2, who quotes similar expressions from 4 Ezra.

upon the supernatural powers of evil, Belial or Satan and his followers, to whose malignant agency the deflected course of human history and the afflictions of the saints are commonly traced. With the Judgement the cosmic drama reaches its conclusion; the present age comes to an end, and the righteous pass to their reward in the eternal Kingdom of God.[1]

The presence of Persian influence in the foregoing scheme is hardly to be denied. The very conception of the world process as a whole, a continuous drama with a definite beginning and a predetermined end, is conceived in the Zoroastrian spirit; and the emphasis upon the powers of evil insensibly but inevitably introduces a more dualistic form of statement than belonged originally to Hebrew monotheism. It is perhaps noteworthy, therefore, that Apocalyptic, in which this tendency asserts itself, was more or less a passing phenomenon in the history of Judaism. Certain it is that Rabbinic Judaism, as it developed after the Destruction of Jerusalem, turned its back on the whole apocalyptic idea; and the books in which the idea had been promulgated for more than two centuries were absolutely without influence on the sub-

[1] The promised 'reign of God' thus comes to be thought of as a heavenly Kingdom in which the righteous dead of all ages receive the divine reward of their individual faithfulness. Hence the idea of a Messianic kingdom or 'reign of the saints' upon the earth becomes purely irrelevant; it is a harking back to another set of ideas altogether. Nevertheless, because they have inherited the idea of such an earthly kingdom, the Apocalyptic writers, or most of them, feel bound to keep a place for it in their scheme; and they do so by treating it as temporary in character—a period variously estimated as lasting for forty, seventy, four hundred, or a thousand years, between the catastrophic close of the 'present age' and the final Judgement which is to inaugurate the eternal Kingdom of God in heaven. The introduction in the Book of Revelation of the thousand years' reign with Christ before the general resurrection and final Judgement is an echo of this Judaic confusion. Its reappearance there, and the subsequent inclusion of the Book in the New Testament canon, caused Chiliasm or the doctrine of the Millennium to be regarded for several centuries as an integral part of Christian doctrine. But Jerome at the end of the fourth century casts ridicule on these *opiniones iudaicae*.

sequent course of Jewish religion and theology. They practically dropped out of knowledge, and would have disappeared altogether, had they not been widely read in Christian circles in the first two centuries of our era, and translated into the various languages of Eastern Christianity—Greek, Syriac, Ethiopic, Armenian, Slavonic. Some of them have only come to light in quite recent times through the discovery of manuscript copies in one or other of these languages. Rabbinic Judaism continued to believe—it believes to-day, says Mr. Montefiore—in the advent of a Messiah and of the Messianic age; 'but the Messiah and his age were relegated to a distant and indefinite future . . . much as the Second Advent is to-day by an old-fashioned and orthodox Protestant'.[1]

As regards Christianity, on the contrary, Apocalyptic formed the very atmosphere in which the new religion was born; and its influence in shaping the beliefs of the early Church and upon the subsequent formulation of Christian theology was, as we shall see, profound and lasting. The New Testament writers go even further than the Jewish Apocalypses in the ascendancy which they ascribe to Satan in the present world—the present 'age' or order of things. St. Paul actually calls him 'the god of this world'. (2 Cor. iv. 4) and the title 'prince of this world' occurs three times in the Fourth Gospel (xii. 31, xiv. 30, xvi. 11). 'We know', says the same writer in his First Epistle, 'that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.' In his capacity as world-ruler, Satan offers Jesus, in the story of the Temptation, 'all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them', if he will fall down and worship him. Luke's version makes him expressly vaunt his authority, 'To thee will I give all this authority, and the glory of them: for it hath been delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it.' And besides 'the prince of the power of the air' himself (Eph. ii. 2), St. Paul

[1] *Judaism and St. Paul*, pp. 51–2.

knows many other 'world-rulers of this darkness'. 'Put on the whole armour of God', he says in Ephesians (vi. 11–12), 'that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places'. The mission of Christ is frequently represented as a fateful duel with the forces of evil: Satan is the strong man armed, who keepeth his palace and his goods in peace till a stronger than he shall come upon him and overcome him and divide his spoils. The cruxifixion is attributed to the agency of the powers of darkness (Luke xxii. 53; John xiv. 30; 1 Cor. ii. 8); and the ultimate decisive victory signalized by the Resurrection is represented by St. Paul as a triumph over these same principalities, making 'a show of them openly'. (Col. ii. 15).

With such beliefs as to the plight of the world it was natural that the gospel of Jesus should be understood by his first followers as an authentic promise of that supernatural End of the age, and the ensuing Kingdom of Heaven, which had hovered before the minds of pious Jews. The message of John the Baptist was 'The Kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Jesus himself continually made use of the same expression, 'the Kingdom of heaven' or 'the Kingdom of God', and much that he said about it seemed to convey the same meaning. The gospels are full of the apocalyptic hope.

CHAPTER XII

THE HISTORIC JESUS

That the burden of the preaching of Jesus himself was the near approach of the Kingdom of God and the need of repentance as the condition of admission to that Kingdom rests on the explicit statements of the first three evangelists (Mark i. 14–15, Matt. iv. 17, Luke viii. 1). The nearness of the Kingdom was the 'good news of God' which Jesus 'came into Galilee preaching', saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the good news' (Mark i. 15, R.V.). It is also the first article in the charge given to the disciples when sent forth on a preaching mission (Mark vi. 12, Matt. x. 7, Luke ix. 2.) The primary reference of the phrase is, therefore, to the apocalyptic kingdom of the future; and in this respect the message of Jesus differs from that of John the Baptist only in the still greater stress on the imminence of that divine event. Matthew's formulation of the two preachings is in fact identical.

But the Kingdom of God, in the Jewish usage of the term, might be more accurately rendered as the reign or the sovereignty of God. In Jewish religion God was, of course, regarded as the supreme or universal ruler; 'but the dominion of a King is not complete or perfect unless he be recognized by his subjects, and the dominion of God is not yet thus recognized or submitted to throughout the world'.[1] Such universal recognition of the sovereignty of God would, in fact, according to the common Jewish belief, coincide with, if it did not itself constitute, the advent of the Age to Come, the perfect divine polity which is to take the place of 'this present evil world'. The repentance which the Baptist and Jesus preached was to be the means of bringing about the desired event, and at the outset they may have believed that they could carry

[1] Kirsopp Lake, *Landmarks in the History of Early Christianity*, p. 18.

the whole nation with them, and in that way actually realize the Kingdom. In any case, the call to repentance was addressed to the individual, for the nation could be saved only through the change of heart of its individual members. And the call necessarily involved a twofold statement—a statement, on the one hand, of what was fundamentally wrong with the life they had been leading, and, on the other hand, of the governing principles of the new life which they were called upon to lead as inheritors of the Kingdom.

In the Beatitudes, accordingly, and in many others of his sayings as recorded in the Gospels, we find Jesus laying down what we might call the laws of the Kingdom, or, in other words, expounding the meaning of righteousness and salvation, the nature of the life which is well-pleasing in the sight of God, and which is at the same time its own exceeding great reward. The inwardness of true religion, as opposed to the multiplied observances and ceremonies of contemporary Judaism, represented by the Scribes and Pharisees; righteousness as judged in the sight of God, not by the correctness of the outward act or word, but by the inward motive and the state of the heart, and demanding therefore at every point a more exacting standard; humility of spirit, as opposed to self-righteous complacency; the single eye which makes the whole body full of light; and, summing up the whole, the losing of one's life to find it, dying to selfish desires and egoistic cravings, to find our true self in that wider life which is at once the service of man and the service of God: this is obviously a spiritual gospel which is bound up with no future event but is verifiable here and now.

It is as the promulgator of this divine message that Jesus says, 'Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and *I will give you rest*'; for, as St. Paul tells us, 'The mind of the flesh is death; but the mind of the spirit is life and peace' (Rom. viii. 6), and again,

'The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace' (Gal. v. 22) 'My teaching', says Jesus in the Fourth Gospel, 'is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God, or whether I speak from myself.' The appeal is to immediate experience. Put it to the proof, in short, and you will find it true. Whether, therefore, we translate the Lucan passage, 'the kingdom of heaven is within you', or 'the Kingdom of heaven is already in your midst', the kingdom is in either case conceived as a spiritual experience or attitude of mind attainable under present conditions; and this ethical and spiritual sense of the term occurs as naturally in certain passages of the gospels as the eschatological sense is undoubtedly prominent in others.

Extreme adherents of the purely apocalyptic view have chosen to dub the ethics of Jesus a mere *Interimsethik*, a makeshift scheme, so to say, to bridge over the short interval which was to elapse before the coming of the Kingdom. In a sense this may be true enough, for in a perfect world there is no more place for ethics as such, that is, for ethics as a system of precepts. But surely never was label more unfortunately chosen. The ideals of the Sermon on the Mount may be in important respects inapplicable to human society as it has existed, or can exist while human nature remains as it is. The doctrine of non-resistance is a sufficient example. But Jesus did not profess to adapt his precepts to the imperfections of human nature and the consequent necessities of civilized society. On the contrary, his injunction is—'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect' (Matt. v. 48). His ethic therefore was an absolute ethic precisely because it based itself on this idea of absolute perfection, because it was an ethic of the Kingdom, rather than a practical code for the world as it is. As Professor Kirsopp Lake puts it, 'it expressed principles derived from the world of reality, not from the imperfect society in which

we live'. In the sequel, he adds: 'The Messianic kingdom, its laws and its teaching, ceased to be an expectation but survived as an ideal. Though men gradually ceased to look for the coming of a kingdom in which sin, suffering, and death would miraculously be abolished, they never wholly forgot that they had enjoyed the vision of the time when these things would happen, and they pressed forward to make the world in which they were living correspond somewhat more closely to the city of God which they had seen.' [1]

Apart from what may have been eventually involved in his eschatological expectations, the gospel which Jesus came preaching was thus independent of any theory as to his own person; and it is difficult to gather with certainty from the gospels what his own beliefs about himself and his mission were. Mark, the earliest of the gospels in the form in which we possess them, is separated by about forty years from the events which it relates. Matthew and Luke, the writers of which both use Mark as one of their authorities, are at least twenty years later. The narratives are therefore inevitably coloured by the beliefs which the Christian communities in the second half of the first century had come to entertain about the person of their Lord; and this must often insensibly modify the turn of a phrase and obscure its original meaning. As Mr. Montefiore says, 'We cannot get beyond the Jesus as the faith of the earliest community conceives him. Old history and new faith are fused together; the picture of Jesus which the Synoptics show has not only many painful gaps, but is throughout covered with a varnish which here and there does not allow anything of the original to shine through. Just where we most want to know, we must always be content to conjecture.' [2] Nevertheless, it is a striking testimony to the general trustworthiness of the narrative that

[1] *Earlier Epistles of St. Paul*, pp. 444, 447.
[2] *Synoptic Gospels*, i. 67–8.

the Gospels, especially in the case of Mark, record incidentally so much that is inconsistent with the later belief, and enable us thereby, at certain points at any rate, to get behind the 'varnish' of which Mr. Montefiore speaks. Owing to the fortunate preservation of the comparatively more primitive Marcan document, we are frequently able, by comparing the different versions of the three evangelists, to trace the successive modifications which the same incident or the same saying has undergone in the course of transmission, and so to arrive at general canons of criticism, which we can apply with considerable confidence in similar cases.

It would be out of place here to multiply instances of what is meant. One need only recall the apocalyptic predictions ascribed to Jesus, which experience had long since shown to be unfounded, or the repeated indications that Jesus regarded his mission as limited to his own people —passages which must have sounded strangely in the ears of the Christian communities for whom the Gospels were written, the great majority of whose members were Gentiles. They contrast strangely, too, with the post-resurrection command which the writers record elsewhere, to preach the Gospel to all nations—a commission which, again, if supposed to be an injunction of the Risen Lord to the original disciples, it is impossible to reconcile with what we know of the history of the early Church in the immediate sequel. As examples of this influence of the community-belief in shaping the narrative or moulding a phrase, we may take Matthew's account of the baptism of Jesus by John, as compared with the short and simple narrative of Mark. To Mark it was the natural beginning of the public ministry of Jesus, who is represented as taking up the message of the Baptist and completing his work on a grander scale. But to a later generation it seemed incongruous that their divine Lord should submit to baptism at the hands of a mortal, a baptism which is described

in Mark's context as 'a baptism of repentance unto remission of sins'. Matthew accordingly represents John as protesting against the inversion of their roles. 'John would have hindered him, saying, "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" But Jesus answering said unto him, "Suffer it now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness". Then he suffered him.' The immediate recognition of Jesus as the expected Messiah is obviously inconsistent with the account, in a later chapter, of John's hearing in prison of the works of the Christ and sending his disciples to ask, 'Art thou he that cometh or look we for another?' Or, as an example of the transformation of a single phrase, we may recall the words in which Jesus rebuked one who came to him, kneeling, addressing him as 'Good Master', and asking him what he must do to inherit eternal life: 'Why callest thou me good? None is good save one, even God.' So the words stand in Mark (x. 18), but the attitude of Jesus was so incredible to the author of Matthew, or some redactor of his text, that, by a slight change both in the question put to Jesus and in the answer given, the vivid and memorable words are deprived at once of their sting and of their point by being made to run—'Why askest thou me concerning that which is good? One there is which is good' (Matt. xix. 17).

If, in spite of these difficulties, we try to find some credible answer to the question—What were the beliefs of Jesus about himself and his Mission?—we may conveniently start from Professor Burkitt's recent statement in his little book on *Christian Beginnings*. We may find in the end that, with certain explanations, it comes as near the truth as we are likely to get. 'What I seem to read from the documents,' he says, 'what is emphasized in Mark as uppermost in the mind of Jesus, is not the choice of this or that epithet or title as the most appropriate, but the irresistible sense of vocation. And this took shape in a

conviction that the God of Israel, who had called him Son in a special sense not shared by others, had marked him out thereby as the instrument of bringing in (or at least hastening) the End of the present state of things, by his becoming in some way a sacrifice or ransom for the elect. In Mark x. 45[1] this is condensed into a single saying, but it is implied everywhere.'

An irresistible sense of vocation—that is the first point, and, stated thus generally, it is one about which every one is likely to be agreed. From the outset of his career Jesus comes before us in the narrative as a man deeply conscious of his being 'sent' by God with a special message. The word of the Lord has come to him, in visions and in voices, as it came to the prophets of old, and in the silences of long nights spent in solitary meditation and prayer. Men remarked of him that he taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Prophecy had ceased for two centuries and more in Israel, and the scribes simply expounded the written Law and elaborated the details of its application. But Jesus had nourished himself on the prophetical books, and in important respects his teaching may be fairly described, in Mr. Montefiore's words, as 'a revival of prophetic Judaism'. 'Jesus,' he says, 'at any rate in his earlier ministry, seems most aptly to be described as a true successor to the old, and especially to the great pre-exilic Prophets, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah'.[2] There is the same tone of authority in his denunciations of the empty formalism and complacent self-righteousness of the ecclesiastical teachers of his day, the same accent of personal certitude in his announcement, as from God, of the essentials of true religion. What is the reiterated 'Thus saith the Lord' of the Prophets, but their intense assurance of the moral foundations of the world, not an

[1] 'For verily the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.'

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 100.

opinion based on the collation of passages and the interpretation of documents, but the one great truth staring them in the face, the one thing needing to be said to a faithless generation?

We know nothing of the life and thoughts of Jesus up till his thirtieth year, when he came to be baptized of John in the Jordan, and shortly afterwards, on John's imprisonment, stepped forward himself to proclaim John's message of the near advent of the Kingdom. We know, however, from the sequel that he must have been a diligent student of the Jewish Scriptures, and must have pondered deeply the ways of God with his people Israel. The providences of God in the past history of the nation were inseparable in the mind of a devout Jew from the thought of the divine purpose in the future; and, as we have seen, apocalyptic hopes were in the air. Jesus was familiar with the Book of Daniel and can hardly have been ignorant of the Book of Enoch. The preaching of John was itself an outcome of the prevailing expectation of the End of the present Age. Naturally, therefore, the reports that reached him of John's preaching would draw the younger man irresistibly to see and hear for himself; and it is inherently probable that what he saw and heard served to clarify and focus the ideas over which he had brooded for years. The day, therefore, on which he decided to identify himself with the new movement marked for him an epoch in his life, and he felt himself henceforth a dedicated spirit. In the solemn exaltation of the moment, it may well have been that, as he came up out of the water, he had a vision which he accepted as setting the seal of divine approval upon the step he had taken and the resolution he had formed. More than this it is not necessary to read into the consciousness of Jesus at this point, even if we assume the literal accuracy of the words which he heard sounding in his ears ('Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased'). Divine sonship

could not even remotely suggest to Jewish ears the metaphysical relation which it afterwards came to signify in Christian theology. The thought of God as the Father was indeed, as has been proved, 'the characteristic note of Jewish piety' in these later centuries, 'not the father of the people only, as in the Old Testament, but of individuals. . . . The word expresses love, confidence, and intimacy, and the relation is reflected in the quality of obedience. The attitude of the Jew towards God is contrasted in this respect with that of the Gentile. . . . The sovereignty of God and his fatherhood are so far from conflicting that one of the most familiar of the synagogue prayers begins, "Our Father, our King".'[1] It is in this sense that the Fatherhood of God assumes central importance in the teaching of Jesus; the divine sonship which he exemplifies and inculcates is a moral and spiritual relation. The idea of God as the Heavenly Father constitutes in itself no new departure, still less can its enunciation by Jesus be regarded—as some Christian writers would persuade us—as laying the foundations of a new religion. What was new was the peculiar intimacy with which the relation was realized in his own case—the closeness of his communion with his God and Father. He did not merely teach the fatherhood; he lived the sonship.

We cannot say with certainty whether the sense of vocation borne in upon him at his baptism already involved what is commonly called his 'Messianic consciousness'—the belief, that is to say, that he was himself the promised Messiah who was to inaugurate the approaching Kingdom of God. Completely ignorant as we are of his previous mental history, we cannot pretend to say how far his reflections may have already carried him. It is quite possible—many writers indeed believe—that the conviction of his Messianic function stood clear in his own mind from the very outset of his public ministry, and

[1] G. F. Moore, *History of Religions*, ii. 74.

that we may, therefore, with psychological propriety connect his realization and acceptance of that destiny with his ecstatic experience as he came up out of the water. But, if he was fully persuaded in his own mind of this unique vocation, the assertion of it did not form any part of his public teaching; and even to the inner circle of his followers he does not appear to have mentioned it till a comparatively late date (at Caesarea Philippi). At first, indeed, even if we suppose him convinced of his Messianic function, he was probably not himself clear as to the way in which the Kingdom of God would, in the end, be brought about, and what, in consequence, the discharge of his Messianic duties might eventually involve. In outline his perspective of the future was necessarily determined by the associations of the apocalyptic figure of the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, as depicted in Daniel and the Book of Enoch. His constant use of this enigmatic title[1] throughout the Gospels is sufficient evidence of this. But the associations of that supernatural figure were not at all with the path of suffering and death which Jesus was destined to tread. There was, in fact, no suggestion by the apocalyptic writers that the Messiah was to live as a man on the earth before his appearance in the clouds to judge the world. On the contrary, he was apparently to come direct from God to discharge that function and inaugurate the New Age. Hence Jesus may have originally conceived

[1] We may take it that, although the title Son of David occurs from time to time in the narratives, and although the early Christians traced the descent of their Lord from David through two divergent genealogical trees, Jesus had discarded for himself the conception of the Davidic King. The passage at arms in which, applying the current methods of Scriptural exegesis, he confronts his opponents with the dilemma 'How is the Messiah the Son of David when David himself calleth him Lord?' can hardly be interpreted in any other sense. He would not have played, as he does there, with an idea to which he attached any religious significance. He had similarly set aside—and his whole conduct was a protest against—the ideal cherished by the popular party (the Patriots or Zealots) of a military leader who should throw off the hated Roman yoke.

his earthly mission to consist essentially in winning the whole nation to repentance by the preaching of the good news, and thus bringing about, automatically as it were, the great consummation. God would then intervene in some miraculous fashion and invest him with his Messianic powers and dignity.[1]

There is certainly a strong suggestion in the gospel narratives that the early teaching of Jesus in Galilee was marked by a buoyancy, one might almost say a gaiety of spirit, which is inconsistent with the presence of the constant shadow of the Cross.[2] Most likely it was only gradually, in the later months of the Galilean ministry, that the presentiment of the inevitable end forced itself upon his mind. The common people still heard him gladly, but

[1] This is the view taken by Canon Streeter in his essay on the 'Historic Christ': 'The definite rejection of any political conception of Messiahship and the acceptance of the apocalyptic symbol of the Son of Man brought with it the determination of his immediate course of action. The manifestation of the "Son of Man" was part of the Great Restoration to be brought about by immediate Divine intervention. It was obvious, therefore, that his Messiahship was only, as it were, that of a Messiah presumptive. Not till the time came for the Kingdom to be established would He appear as King. His obvious duty then for the present lay in the continuance of the work of John the Baptist, i. e. in urging men to prepare themselves for the Kingdom that was soon to be. Repent ye, for the Kingdom is at hand' (*Foundations*, p. 102). As a matter of fact 'it was the teaching of the Rabbis that if Israel could perfectly accomplish the keeping of the Law, the New Age would have arrived; that if Israel could keep two Sabbaths—nay one Sabbath—perfectly, redemption would come; that if Israel could only completely and radically repent, the Messiah would appear' (A. E. J. Rawlinson, *New Testament Doctrine of the Christ*, p. 21, with a reference to F. Weber, *Jüdische Theologie*, pp. 348 sqq.)

[2] So Johannes Weiss:—'Die ganze Stimmung der ersten Verkündigung Jesu, seine freudige begeisterte Art, im Unterschiede vom Pessimismus des Täufers, macht nicht den Eindruck als sei er von vorn herein mit Resignation und der Erwartung seines Todes in die Arbeit eingetreten. Der Zauber seiner Persönlichkeit, vor allem die Anziehungskraft die er auf die Verzweifelten und die Verlorenen geübt hat, wäre unbegreiflich, wenn von Anfang an düstere Todesentschlossenheit auf ihm gelastet hätte. Er muss, wenigstens in der ersten Zeit, an einen baldigen, glänzenden Sieg der Sache Gottes geglaubt haben' (*Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes*, pp. 99–100, second edition).

by the freedom of his criticisms he had arrayed against him the constituted religious authorities of the nation, and they had apparently denounced him to Herod as a dangerous character. Herod, at any rate, was suspicious of this new prophet, who seemed too much to resemble the Baptist whom he had put to death. Galilee, in the circumstances, was hardly safe for Jesus and his followers, and we read accordingly of much journeying to and fro—forced journeys it would seem—to the north into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and eastward into Decapolis and the country beyond Jordan. Dogged everywhere by the Pharisees and their questions, we are told Jesus 'sighed deeply in his spirit' (Mark viii. 12). The rosy hopes of the first months had already disappeared. It is about this time that Mark introduces the incident at Caesarea Philippi, when Jesus first acknowledged his Messiahship to the inner circle of his disciples,[1] and at the same time 'began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again'.

The explicit predictions of his suffering and death, including at times such circumstantial details as the mocking, the spitting, the scourging, obviously belong to the 'varnish' of the picture. The presupposition, more or less common to all the Evangelists, that Jesus knew beforehand

[1] As has been pointed out, this incident is 'one which could not possibly have been invented by, and was even opposed to the sense of, the later community. For the latter the Messiahship of Jesus was the surest, most self-evident, and precious thing about him. How then could he have forborne to speak of it till towards the end of his life? Wherever the community forged the tradition out of its own consciousness, it naturally made Jesus testify to his Messiahship from its beginning. Witness the consistent representation of the Fourth Gospel and also occasional statements of the first three evangelists in contradiction to the scene at Caesarea Philippi. The paradoxical character of the scene when compared with the faith of the community is indeed the best guarantee of its genuineness' (Bousset, *Jesus*, p. 171, English translation).

'all things that should come upon him' (John xviii. 4) would, if consistently carried out, involve a Docetic view of the whole life-history, and reduce the drama to the level of a puppet-show. But it is inherently probable that, having thus taken his followers into a closer confidence, Jesus would at the same time seek to give them some indication of the change which had come over his own thoughts, and so prepare them to some extent for a future which he too surely foresaw. The disciples were puzzled —scandalized indeed—by the idea of a suffering Messiah. It was, in point of fact, an idea new to Jewish thought, and must have been, at first at least, an enigma to Jesus himself. His words evidently made little impression on the easy optimism of his followers. They continued to discuss the order of their precedence in the coming Kingdom; and, when the crisis came, they were quite unprepared to meet it. Yet they could not help being disturbed at times by the silent preoccupation of their Master. Mark gives in passing a vivid glimpse of the little band shortly after this incident. 'They were on the road going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus went in front of them. And they were in dismay and some who followed were in fear' (x. 42, Moffat's translation).

Whether the new conception of his Messiahship was connected in the mind of Jesus himself with the figure of the Suffering Servant in Isa. liii must necessarily remain uncertain. The identification dates, at any rate, from the earliest days of the Christian Church. In Acts viii. 32 the Ethiopian eunuch is represented as reading this chapter and inquiring its meaning, whereupon Philip, beginning from this chapter, 'preached unto him Jesus'. In Luke xxii. 37 a quotation from the chapter is put into the mouth of Jesus himself, but in the context the introduction of the passage is not convincing. The better substantiated saying in Mark x. 45 which speaks of the Son of Man giving his life a ransom for many

reads, however, like a reminiscence of the same verse of Isaiah, and there is nothing improbable in the supposition that the famous chapter must have seemed to him singularly illuminative of the prospect which he saw opening up before him. He, too, was going to meet suffering, and probably death, in the discharge of his mission and for the sake of his people. Not that suffering or death had any place in his Messianic office. The Messiah, as apocalyptically conceived, was neither sin-bearer nor Redeemer. As already said, his first appearance was to be as God's representative to judge the world and put an end to the tribulations of the righteous. But, if Jesus believed himself to be the Messiah-designate, it might well be that for him, Jesus of Nazareth, a man among men, it had been ordained that he must suffer many things before his manifestation in the glory of his office at the right hand of power.

The case ought not to be presented as if Jesus at this juncture deliberately resolved to die—planned his own death, as Mr. Middleton Murry has recently put it. Schweitzer similarly represents the journey to Jerusalem and all that followed as a calculated attempt to 'force God's hand' and 'compel' the coming of the Kingdom.[1] According to Jewish belief, as we have seen, the repentance of the nation, if universal and sincere, would of itself ensure that event; it would, indeed, in a spiritual sense itself constitute the arrival of the reign of God. Repentance, therefore, was what the Baptist and Jesus preached. But still the coming of the Kingdom was delayed; masses of the people, it was too obvious, remained untouched by the appeal. Hence some other way must be found, and, according to Schweitzer, the thought of Jesus—born of his brooding over the Second Isaiah's picture of the Suffering Servant—was that, as the elect Messiah, he might take upon himself the transgressions of the nation and offer his life as 'a ransom for many'. The way would

[1] Cf. *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, pp. 387–90.

then at last be clear for the advent of the Kingdom. To such a view it may be readily granted that, whatever Jesus may precisely have meant by 'ransom' in the saying recorded by Mark, the context in which it occurs—the new conception of the Son of Man as coming not to be ministered unto, but to minister—is undoubtedly in line with his deepest spiritual teaching. But that Jesus should contemplate playing the card of his own death as a means of 'forcing the divine hand' is fantastically out of keeping with the attitude of filial submission which is so marked a characteristic of his life and doctrine. The journey to Jerusalem was, in its result, what Schweitzer calls it, a 'pilgrimage of death'; but it is not necessary to suppose this result predetermined by Jesus himself. 'He stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem' (Luke ix. 51), because only there, at the centre of things, could the fate of the nation be determined and his own Messiahship put to the proof. Humanly speaking he had grave reason to forebode the worst, and we may well believe that he went prepared to die, if that should be his Father's will. But, while ready to accept whatever God had in store for him, it was essentially to explore the divine purpose that he went, and not with any fixed resolve to die. There are indeed, indications in the narrative that, up to the very last, he cherished, perhaps half-consciously, the hope of some signal divine intervention which, were it even *in articulo mortis*, would vindicate his Messiahship and in the twinkling of an eye inaugurate the Kingdom. The narrative of the agony in Gethsemane, so humanly true, so obviously part of the earliest tradition, is strongly suggestive of such a lingering hope—some such hope as actually finds expression in Matthew's account of the arrest and the rebuke by Jesus of the follower who draws the sword in his defence: 'Thinkest thou that I cannot beseech my Father, and he shall even now send me more than twelve legions of angels?' (xxvi. 53). Even the precaution he appears to have ob-

served during these last days, of withdrawing from the city at nightfall (Mark xi. 19), is not the act of a man bent on self-immolation.

The action of Jesus in cleansing the Temple of the dealers and money-changers brought him at once into open conflict with the priesthood, touching, as it did, the revenues that came to them indirectly from these commercial transactions. But, when asked by what authority he ventured on such a proceeding, Jesus dexterously parried the question; he still refused to make a public disclosure of his 'Messianic secret'. It was as 'the prophet from Galilee', not as the Messiah, that he 'was daily in the Temple teaching' during the days before the Passover. The triumphal entry into Jerusalem, even if it took place, as recorded, by his direction, or at least with his sanction, can have been in no sense a 'Messianic' entry, if by that be meant a welcome by the acclaiming populace of the expected Messiah. That is, no doubt, the suggestion of the narrative in Matthew and Luke, and of course still more strongly in John. 'Hosanna to the Son of David' is Matthew's phrase. 'Blessed is the King that cometh in the name of the Lord' is Luke's version. But Mark says simply, 'Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Blessed is the Kingdom that cometh, the kingdom of our father David: Hosanna in the highest.' The welcome was, therefore, to Jesus as the preacher of the Kingdom, or at most as Elias, the forerunner, not the King, whose advent was to be 'in power'. The acclamations, moreover, came, according to both Matthew and Luke, from the band of disciples and Galilean pilgrims who accompanied him; their number and their demeanour as they entered the city excited attention and comment. 'All the city was stirred', we read in Matthew, 'saying, Who is this?' And the multitudes [i.e. in Matthew's context the large body of his followers] said, 'This is the prophet, Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee' (xxi. 11 R.V.). It was not, in fact,

till the supreme moment, in answer to the High Priest's challenge, that Jesus publicly affirmed his Messianic claim. That he had made the claim was the charge brought against him; and on his acknowledging its truth, 'the high priest rent his clothes', and 'they all condemned him to be worthy of death'.

Although no public utterance could be quoted against him, his claim to be the Messiah had been known for some time to the inner circle of his disciples; and it has been suggested, with considerable probability, that the Messianic secret was what Judas betrayed.[1] 'What the priests wanted', says Kirsopp Lake, 'was evidence to justify a condemnation, not information to lead to an arrest.'[2] Judas supplied them with the evidence they required, and the procedure before the Sanhedrin was arranged accordingly. As Jesus admitted the charge, no further witnesses were needed; and by representing his Messianic claim as involving treason to the Roman government, his enemies were able to secure his condemnation to death. Judgement was given early in the morning, and the sentence was immediately carried out. At three in the afternoon, after he had hung six hours upon the Cross, Jesus cried with a loud voice—'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'; and a few minutes later he cried again with a loud voice and gave up the ghost. He had tasted the utmost bitterness of death, in the desertion of his followers and the silence of his God. But the 'It is finished', which the Fourth Evangelist so daringly substitutes for the last cry of anguish, does in fact interpret more truly the significance of his death. The Jewish eschatology, in terms of which he conceived his mission, faded gradually away; but through years numbered in thousands the Cross on which he hung was to be for the foremost nations of the world their most sacred symbol of redemptive love.

[1] So Schweitzer, *op. cit.*, p. 394.
[2] *The Stewardship of Faith*, p. 26. n.

CHAPTER XIII

THE FIRST CHRISTIANS IN JERUSALEM

JESUS AS THE CHRIST

It may seem at first sight a paradox to say that Jesus at no time of his life regarded himself as the founder of a new religion. Nothing, however, is more clearly deducible from the three Synoptic Gospels, if read together, with eyes cleared of dogmatic assumptions, and treated as the critical historian would treat any other ancient documents composed under similar circumstances. Dr. McGiffert hardly overstates the case when he says in his Lectures on *The God of the Early Christians*:

'Jesus, though our Christianity roots itself in him, remained a Jew to the end. . . . The God whom he worshipped was the God of his people Israel—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. . . . So far as we can judge from the Synoptic Gospels and from his attitude as reflected there, he did not regard it as his mission to promulgate a new God, or to teach new ideas about God, but rather to summon his fellows to live as God—his God and theirs—would have them live. . . . His uniqueness, so far as his teaching goes, lay not in the novelty of it, but in the insight and unerring instinct with which he made his own the best of the thought of his countrymen. His piety seems to have been nourished particularly on Deuteronomy, the Psalms, and Isaiah, and it is the ideas of God found in those writings that are chiefly reflected in his words'.[1]

As a deliberate summing up by the President of one of the most important Theological Colleges of the Presbyterian Church, such a statement commands attention, and if in the context Dr. McGiffert (doubtless in revulsion from the opposite extreme) must seem to many readers to underestimate the originality and peculiar emphasis of the teaching of Jesus, when taken as a whole,[2] that does

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 2–3 and 21.

[2] Mr. Montefiore, writing from the standpoint of Liberal Judaism, does, in fact, do more justice to what was really original in the teaching and

not affect the historical accuracy of the sentences quoted. They may seem to minimize unduly the universalistic elements in the teaching, which were bound in the long run to act as a disruptive force upon the national religion. But Jesus himself, we must remember, so far as the records enable us to judge, did not draw any such revolutionary conclusion; with his belief in the immediately impending advent of the Kingdom, it was impossible that he should. It is only necessary to recall the typical sayings in which he defines his attitude towards 'the law and the prophets' as that of one who has come not to destroy but to fulfil, and his own practice of enjoining those whom he healed to show themselves to the priest and offer the gifts that Moses commanded. The righteousness of the children of the Kingdom is to exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees in its greater inwardness, its purity of motive, and in the

attitude of Jesus. In his recent article in the *Hibbert Journal* (October 1929) on 'The Originality of Jesus' he lays down the sound principle that, to be estimated adequately, the teaching must be taken as a whole. 'And as a whole we may legitimately call it original, *even though there were Rabbinic and Old Testament parallels for every individual teaching*'. Applying this principle to the much discussed question of the fatherhood of God, he concludes: 'It is apparently a fact that Jesus thought of God as his (and our) Father, and used the term Father for God more habitually and constantly than is the case with any one Rabbi of whom we know. And this regular conception of God as Father, in proportion to the intensity and vividness of the feeling which suggested it, was something which may fitly be called original.' Similarly, he says of the Beatitudes: 'The Beatitudes as a whole seem more than each one taken separately. There is a certain glow and intensity about them which seems new and distinctive. We can find Rabbinic parallels to each of them, but as a whole they seem original'. And he returns to emphasize, as he had already done in several contexts, the essential novelty of the injunction so central in the Gospels and in the subsequent history of Christianity, to *seek out* the fallen and the lost. 'The Rabbis', he had said in 1910, 'attached no less value to repentance than Jesus.... They too welcomed the sinner in his repentance. But to seek out the sinner, and, instead of avoiding the bad companion, to choose him as your friend, in order to work his moral redemption, this was, I fancy, something new in the religious history of Israel. It inaugurated a new idea: the idea of redemption.... The rescue and deliverance of the sinner through pity and love and personal service—the work and the method seem both alike due to the teacher of Nazareth.' (*Some Elements of the Religious Teaching of Jesus*, pp. 57–8.)

sense of proportion which can distinguish between the commandment of God and the tradition of man (Mark vii. 1–13). The Law, that is to say, is to be interpreted in the spirit of the Prophets. But otherwise there is no suggestion of any radical transformation in the tenets and practices of the national religion. The perpetuity of the Jewish economy is presupposed when it is not directly asserted. The most conclusive evidence that during his lifetime Jesus made no suggestion, even to his nearest followers, of a break with Judaism, is furnished by the history of the primitive community at Jerusalem after his death.

Criticism has, indeed, been familiar, from the time of Lessing at least, with the distinction between the religion of Jesus himself and the Christian religion founded in his name. A century and a half ago, in one of his suggestive fragments, Lessing called attention to the difference between what he calls 'the religion of Christ and the Christian religion'. 'The former', he says, 'the religion of Christ, is the religion which he himself, as man, knew and practised; the latter, the Christian religion, is the religion which holds that he was more than man, and makes him himself an object of worship.' [1] Since then the distinction in question may be said to have become a theological commonplace. It was very clearly and unambiguously formulated by Principal Martin, in the course of his Cunningham Lectures recently delivered in Edinburgh.[2] 'The teachings of Jesus,' he said, 'precious heritage though they were, were not, after all, his most characteristic contributions to the spiritual life of man. Their importance was secondary. It was a commonplace how seldom in the New Testament—outside the Gospels—they were referred to. The new religion was there seen building itself up on no truths taught by Jesus, but around what He Himself

[1] *Werke* (ed. Maltzahn), xi. 2, p. 242.
[2] As reported in *The Scotsman*, Feb. 25 and 28, 1928.

was understood to have been and to have done. . . . Whatever may have been the themes of Jesus' own preaching, his followers preached Him. . . . That was why they broke with Judaism and founded a new religion.' And, as Professor Bacon puts it, 'the supreme problem in the history of our religion is precisely how it could change so profoundly in the brief space that can be allowed between the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom by Jesus in Galilee, and the gospel that Paul referred to in 1 Corinthians, as received by him in the beginning, the redemption faith he expressly says was common to all disciples. The one is a gospel *of* Jesus, and the other a gospel *about* Jesus.' [1]

It must be our task, therefore, to trace at least the first steps in this process of transformation. Apart from the impression made upon the original disciples by the personality of Jesus, three influences may be seen at work. In the first place, the apocalyptic setting in which the figure of their Master was conceived after his death by his first disciples; secondly, the associations of the Saviour-god of the Hellenistic mystery-religions, which inevitably gathered round the figure in the minds of Gentile converts; and, thirdly, the influence of Greek philosophy, in terms of which the doctrine of the Church regarding his Person was ultimately cast. It will be desirable to consider each of these shortly in turn.

The fundamental and distinctive article of the primitive Christian faith was the belief in the Resurrection of Jesus. The speeches of Peter and Stephen in the early chapters of Acts, although necessarily composed by the author in the Thucydidean spirit,[2] may be confidently accepted as

[1] *Jesus and Paul*, p. 330.

[2] Thucydides tells us that his practice was to make the speakers say what was in his opinion demanded of them by the various occasions, adhering of course as closely as possible to the general sense of what they really said. (Bk. I. 22.)

truly reflecting in this respect the position of the original disciples and of the first community of Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. We may accept them just because they fall so far short of the later Christology of the Church.

The apostles are, throughout Acts, before all else, 'witnesses of the resurrection' (Acts i. 22; ii. 32; iii. 15 and 32; x. 40; xiii. 31). The text of the first mission-preaching was the Resurrection as the divine seal set upon the Messiahship of Jesus (iii. 13–21). 'The God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Servant Jesus, whom ye delivered up and denied before the face of Pilate. . . . Repent ye therefore and turn again that your sins may be blotted out . . . and that he may send the Christ who hath been appointed for you, even Jesus: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things.' So again (v. 30): 'The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew, hanging him on a tree. Him did God exalt at his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel and remission of sins'. It is the old message, 'Repent ye, for the kingdom of God is at hand', infused with a new intimacy and certainty. For, if the promised Messiah has already been manifested in the person of Jesus, that is the conclusive sign that the time of the End has really arrived, and that his advent in power cannot possibly be long delayed. The prominence of the Resurrection as the first article in the primitive Confession of Faith is otherwise sufficiently attested by the language in which St. Paul recalls to the Corinthians the gospel which he preached to them and the very form of words in which he preached it: 'For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures.' (1 Cor. xv. 1–4.)

St. Paul goes on to enumerate the 'appearances' on which this belief was based, and, as this passage is the only

account of the post-resurrection appearances which we can regard as approximately contemporary, its importance in determining the nature of the evidence is obviously fundamental. What he offers to the Corinthians *de fide*, as 'what he had received', is an enumeration of five (or six) appearances of the Risen Christ to Cephas and others, including that to himself on the road to Damascus. As he makes no distinction between his own case and the others, the natural inference is that the others were more or less similar in type to his own; that is to say, they were not reappearances of the human Jesus as the disciples had known him in the familiar surroundings of their everyday life, but ecstatic visions of the exalted and glorified Messiah, realized in moments of acute religious tension and emotion. The circumstantial story of the Empty Tomb and the sequel, which we find, with variations of more or less significance, in all the four Gospels, was clearly therefore unknown to him. If he had heard of it in Jerusalem, where he was in touch with the original disciples, he could not possibly have avoided referring to it here, more especially as his own view of the resurrection body, expounded in the same chapter ('Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God'), is wholly inconsistent with the naïve materialism of the Gospel narratives.

For any one who reflects, there can be little doubt that the appearances which convinced the original disciples of their Master's continued life and activity were, in point of fact, visions of the same nature as St. Paul records in his own case. Such a vision amounts psychologically to a relaxation of a pre-existing state of tension and the flooding of the mind with a sudden certainty of the truth of what had previously been in doubt. And because they were 'visions', we need not therefore label them hallucinations. Fundamentally, the visions represent the compelling force of the personality of Jesus reasserting itself in the minds of the disciples after an interval of consternation, amount-

ing almost to despair, caused by the Crucifixion. The whole situation is very delicately analysed from the psychological side by Johannes Weiss, in his *Urchristenthum*,[1] where he replies to those who denounce such an interpretation of the appearances as reducing the fundamental facts on which Christianity is built to a mere hallucination or deception. But he goes further, and claims that 'the subsequent faithfulness and bravery of the disciples is only intelligible, if their faith was ethically and religiously more deeply anchored than in these experiences. '*Because*, even after the death of Jesus, they could not let him go, and because in spite of his defeat they were still in their inmost hearts convinced that he was called by God to rule—for that reason, what they experienced was able to make on them an impression which determined the whole future. He who so thinks can take the last step also with us and say: the experiences did not come to them from without—they mark rather the end of a painful struggle in which faith proved victorious over doubt. In so far, they are not, as it then appeared to them, the cause, but rather an effect, of their faith.' [2]

Historical criticism has little difficulty in showing that, in the main, the stories of the Empty Tomb belong to a later stage of thought. The evidence of primary religious experience has given place to reflexion and explanation and the production of proofs intended to remove the possibility of doubt. The apologetic and polemical interest of the writers becomes increasingly plain if we take the Gospels in their historical order, and follow the development of the story as it is told by the different Evangelists. The underlying motive is clearly stated by Matthew, the latest of the three; it is to confute the saying, 'commonly reported among the Jews until this day', that the disciples came by night and stole away the corpse, and on the basis of its disappearance proceeded to spread the report of the

[1] pp. 18–28.

[2] *Op. cit.*, pp. 21–2.

resurrection. To this end the Evangelist himself adds one detail after another, each historically more incredible than the last—the sealing up of the tomb, the Roman guard, the earthquake, and the Angel descending from heaven to roll back the stone. The apocryphal *Gospel of Peter* continues where Matthew leaves off. Besides the common soldiers, Pilate gives a captain also to watch the grave: the Evangelist knows his name, Petronius. The stone, which, according to Matthew, Joseph of Arimathea rolled to the door of the tomb, is now placed in position by the elders and scribes, the captain and the soldiers, who seal it with seven seals, and then erect a tent and settle themselves for the night to watch the sequel. Next morning crowds of people from Jerusalem and the neighbourhood come out to investigate the miracle which has taken place.

Such considerations compel us to set aside the whole story of the Empty Tomb, with its wavering outlines and embarrassing implications. The original belief of the disciples doubtless was that the death of Jesus had as its immediate sequel his exaltation; and into such a view the grave and the dead body do not naturally enter at all. It is entirely in accordance with such a belief that it should rest as its foundation on an ecstatic vision of the glorified or exalted Messiah, such a vision as that of Stephen, the first martyr, or of Paul on the way to Damascus. Only so could a conviction so profound be conveyed to their minds. For St. Paul, certainly, the resurrection of Jesus is synonymous with his exaltation.[1] In point of fact, the resuscitated physical frame of 'flesh and bones' (Luke xxiv. 39), which joined the disciples at intervals during the space of forty days, which partook of broiled fish, and eventually disappeared through the clouds into some local heaven, is no

[1] Apparently he had heard nothing in Jerusalem of the Ascension as a miracle distinct from the Resurrection. The Gospels themselves say nothing about it except in a single sentence in Luke, where it is supposed to take place on the evening of Easter Day.

authentic religious figure. As Dean Inge recently pointed out, 'it is obvious that the bodily resurrection of Christ is intimately connected with the bodily ascension', and the latter, as obviously, implies the medieval scheme of the universe as 'a three-storeyed building', consisting of heaven, our earth, and the infernal regions. And, although the Church of England declares in her Articles that Christ ascended into heaven 'with flesh, bones, and all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature . . . and there sitteth', the Dean rightly insists that 'all theological doctrines which rest upon the geocentric theory must be recast', and that the recasting is in fact four hundred years overdue.[1]

What, then, did the appearances mean, and what was their value to the first disciples? It is important to be clear on this point, if we are to understand aright the origin and early development of Christian beliefs about Jesus. They meant not merely such assurance as a modern spiritualist believes himself to possess of the continued activity in another sphere of a friend whom he knew in the present life—not merely the assurance that their Master who had died on the Cross was still alive, but the overwhelming certainty that, in spite of that shameful death, God had thus signally owned him as the 'Anointed One', the Messiah long promised, who should redeem Israel and set up the Kingdom of God.

The Apostles, accordingly, as we read in Acts, 'every day, in the temple and at home, ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus as the Christ' (v. 42). In the light of the Cross, they had revised their ideas of the Messiahship. In the days and weeks which followed the Crucifixion, they doubtless called to mind sayings of Jesus which had only staggered them at the time, but which now shone with a new light. The suffering and the death which had

[1] In his essay contributed to the volume *Science, Religion and Reality*, pp. 357 and 360.

seemed to them at first to negative the Messianic claim, were to be from henceforth its conclusive confirmation. For is not that precisely what 'all the prophets have spoken'? 'Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory?' (Luke xxiv. 15–26). Reading the Old Testament anew in this spirit, the first disciples seemed to themselves to find prefigured on every page the features of the promised Messiah, as these had just been shown to the world in the life and death of Jesus. To the disciples themselves this interpretation of the Scriptures furnished the final and indispensable confirmation of their reborn faith: and they proceeded to use it also as the chief argument in their mission-preaching to their Jewish fellow-countrymen. The first object of that preaching was to remove the 'offence' of the Cross, the scandal of a crucified Messiah, and the speeches in the early chapters of Acts faithfully reproduce the early practice. For St. Paul also the proof from Scripture takes the first place. The importance attached to it is strikingly shown in his statement, already quoted, of the fundamental facts of the gospel. The point is not simply that Jesus died and rose again, but that this happened 'according to the scriptures'. So again in the opening verse of *Romans*, the gospel is vouched for as 'the gospel of God', because it is what had been 'promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures'.

The method of interpretation followed by the early Christians was largely the allegorical method so lavishly applied to the Hebrew scriptures a little earlier by Philo—applied also by Greek philosophers and moralists to the Homeric poems—which consists in reading a symbolic and spiritual meaning into plain statements of biography and history or into the details of ritual observance. The method was already extensively employed in the Rabbinical schools themselves, and St. Paul's application of it to the story of Hagar and Sarah ('which things contain an

allegory: for these women are two covenants') is an excellent example of what is meant.[1] The chapter headings of our English Bibles still remind us of this elaborate typology. But, as Dr. Rawlinson says, 'the detailed arguments of most of the New Testament writers appear quite artificial'. 'A generation which has ceased to regard prophecy in the light of an arsenal of predictive proof-texts no longer regards it as legitimate to argue from the wording of particular passages, taken wholly apart from their context, and without regard to their primary meaning, that they were divinely intended beforehand to refer to our Lord.'[2] In fact, for a modern reader, many of the alleged fulfilments scattered through the Gospels, instead of confirming his belief in the historicity of the facts recorded, induce the suspicion that the incidents owe their existence to the supposed predictions, and that the narrative has been moulded accordingly. As, for example, when the first Evangelist vouches for the flight of the Holy Family into Egypt on the strength of the Old Testament verse, 'Out of Egypt have I called my Son'. But in appropriating such passages as the famous chapter on the Suffering Servant, or such Psalms as the twenty-second and the sixty-ninth, which speak in similar terms of the reproach and the sorrows of the Righteous Servant, they were seeking in fact to transfigure the popular conception of the Messiah, the conception on the whole dominant in the Old Testament, in the spirit of the later utterances of Jesus himself.

In pressing home this argument from the fulfilment of prophecy, the first Christians claimed to be departing in no respect from the faith of their fathers. It was the God of their fathers who had fulfilled his purpose in 'his servant Jesus'. In point of fact, as we first see the primitive community of disciples at Jerusalem, they appear, both in their

[1] Galatians iv. 22–31.
[2] *The New Testament Doctrine of the Christ*, p. 17.

belief and in their practice, as a Jewish sect. They continued to take part in the daily prayers and services of the Temple, and doubtless presented themselves also in the synagogues on the Sabbath. Their religious beliefs differed from those of their fellow Jews only in the conviction that Jesus was the Messiah, who would shortly return, 'in power', to judge the world and close the present Age. But, since the belief in the approaching end of the Age was general, as was also the belief in a promised Messiah, this did not by itself distinguish them sharply from other Jews; and the Jewish authorities appear at first to have allowed the Nazarenes considerable latitude. Serious trouble first arose when the new movement began to attract adherents among the Hellenistic Jews of the Dispersion, who were initially disposed to take a more liberal view of the Law and its obligations. Stephen was killed and the rest of the Hellenistic party scattered. The apostles, however, still remained in Jerusalem (Acts viii. 1), and for a time at least were unmolested. But when Peter surrendered the obligation of the Mosaic Law upon Gentile converts, he was put in prison; and after his escape he disappears from Jerusalem. His place, as head of the community, was taken by James, 'the Lord's brother', under whom the Church at Jerusalem continued to maintain its strict conformity to the Jewish Law. James was noted for the strictness of his own observance: his knees, we are told, had become as hard as a camel's, so constant were his prayers in the Temple for the forgiveness of the nation. He was generally respected, it would appear, by the Jews. His execution in A.D. 62 was condemned as an illegal act, and the then high priest was deposed as the author of the deed. But this Jewish Christianity soon became a backwater, and the name Nazarene survived in the East only as the designation of a heretical Christian sect.[1]

[1] Cf. Moore, *History of Religions*, ii, pp. 146–7.

CHAPTER XIV

THE CHRISTOLOGY OF ST. PAUL: ST. PAUL AND PHILO

The transformation of the Jerusalem gospel of the Kingdom and the Messiah into the 'gospel about Jesus', which finally took shape as Catholic Christianity, was the work of St. Paul; and it was rendered possible by two things; in the first place by the fact that Paul had never known Jesus in the flesh, and in the second place by the fact that he was preaching to a polytheistic world. Whether or not he himself, as a Hellenized Jew of the Dispersion, was more or less unconsciously influenced by his environment, it is certain that, in expounding his gospel, he used with great freedom the vocabulary of the pagan Mysteries; and, even if he had not done so, his Gentile converts would necessarily tend to assimilate their new faith to cults with which they were previously familiar.

St. Paul's statement of the Christian faith in 1 Thessalonians, soon after the beginning of his longer mission-journeys through Asia Minor and Greece, seems still as much within the framework of Jewish Apocalyptic as that of the first believers. So central in his teaching was the belief in the approaching end of the Age that he describes his Christian converts at Thessalonica as those who have 'turned unto God from idols, to serve a living and true God, *and to wait for his Son from heaven*' (1 Thess. i. 10). The Apostle must indeed have preached the nearness of the Parousia with great fervour and conviction, for we find the Thessalonians much exercised about the fate of Christians who might die before the Second Coming; and the Apostle assures them that those who thus die prematurely will not forfeit thereby their share in the Kingdom. In three other places in the short letter 'the coming of our Lord Jesus' is referred to as an event which will happen in the lifetime of those whom he is addressing. In the Second Epistle, he returns to the

subject, to correct a statement which had been mistakenly attributed to him, and expressly reproves those who were making the belief an excuse for idleness, excitedly rushing to and fro and neglecting the ordinary duties of life. With such unspiritual excitement St. Paul had no sympathy; but his belief in the proximity of the second advent remained a vivid reality to him to the end. 'Now it is high time to awake out of sleep,' he writes to the Romans, 'for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent and the day is at hand' (xiii. 11). And in the Epistle to the Philippians, written from Rome in the last months of his life, when he was facing the imminent likelihood of martyrdom—of being 'poured out as a libation', according to his own expression—his message to Philippi still is 'The Lord is at hand' (iv. 5). 'The day of Christ' is twice mentioned in the course of the few pages, and the manner of his coming is to be, as in 1 Corinthians, 'from heaven'—to 'fashion anew the body of our humiliation'. But even in the earliest Epistles certain differences of expression are observable; and in the later Epistles we can quite clearly trace 'a gradual progress away from Apocalyptic Messianism to a position very near that of the Fourth Gospel'.[1]

It has been noted that St. Paul never uses the Aramaic phrase, so familiar to us in the Gospels, 'the Son of Man', and also that 'Christ', the Greek equivalent of 'Messiah', is habitually used as a proper name without any suggestion of its original significance. Instead of Jesus we have the double name Jesus Christ or Christ Jesus. The confession of the first Christians had been that 'Jesus is the Messiah (the Christ)': but for St. Paul the formula of the Christian confession is that 'Jesus Christ is Lord' (Phil. ii. 11). This, he tells us in several places, was the burden of his own preaching.[2] To the Gentiles 'the anointed' was a desig-

[1] Dean Inge, *Outspoken Essays* (First Series), p. 224.

[2] 2 Cor. iv. 5; Col. ii. 6. Cf. Romans x, 9: 'Confess with thy mouth

nation which could convey no clear meaning, while the Son of Man, literally rendered in Greek, would have been purely unintelligible. Hence both terms disappear from the Apostle's vocabulary.

The fundamental difference between the Pauline Christology and that of the original disciples may be stated at once. It is that Christ is considered by Paul throughout as a pre-existing heavenly being. The first followers of Jesus naturally started from the human life of their Master. He is described in Peter's speech on the day of Pentecost as 'a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you'; and God has now accredited 'his servant Jesus' by raising him from the dead. The word παῖς, translated 'servant' in the Revised Version, occurs three times as a characteristic epithet: it is the word applied in the Septuagint to Israel as the righteous Servant of Jehovah. God, we read in Acts, has 'exalted his servant', 'glorified' him, and thus set the Divine seal upon his Messiahship. Jesus was, therefore, from henceforth for the disciples a supernatural figure, inhabitant of a heavenly world, in closest relation to God, who has placed him at His right hand and invested him with quasi-divine functions as His representative at the forthcoming Judgement of the world. But, if Jesus by his exaltation may be said to be elevated to divine rank, it is still conceived as a rank conferred upon a mortal by divine decree, somewhat after the fashion in which Heracles joins the Immortals in the Greek mythology. The Christology of the original disciples is, therefore, frequently described as an apotheosis or an adoptionist Christology, in contrast to the later incarnation Christology of the Church.

But in the Jewish Apocalyptic literature, as we have

Jesus as Lord, and believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead' The term 'Lord' is already freely used in 1 Thess. The origin and significance of the designation will be considered later.

seen, there was no suggestion of a life on earth to be lived by the Messiah. He is represented as from the outset a supernatural being, whose first appearance is to be at the final crisis and Judgement of the world. Thus in the *Book of Enoch* the Son of Man is described as 'chosen and hidden with God before the creation of the world', and he awaits in the treasury of souls the date of his manifestation. The disciples might easily, therefore, have been tempted, by way of reconciling two such divergent conceptions, to indulge in speculations about the pre-existence of Jesus in some heavenly region before his earthly avatar. But they were simple men, untroubled by such difficulties, and it is clear from the records that their thoughts did not travel beyond the human facts of their Master's life and his subsequent 'glorified' existence as the acknowledged 'Christ of God'. But for Paul, who had himself never known the human Jesus, who had seen him only in his heavenly glory in the vision on the way to Damascus, the facts of the life (with the exception of the death) fall altogether into the background. St. Paul's Christology is throughout, or at least increasingly as he proceeds, an incarnation Christology. The Christ, that is to say, is a divine or quasi-divine Being who descends from heaven for the redemption of mankind, a Being for whom, therefore, the earthly life is a transient episode in his eternal existence. He is 'the man from heaven', the second Adam, who descends to earth to repair the mischief wrought by the first,[1] 'emptying himself' temporarily, for that purpose, of his divine prerogatives, 'taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men.'[2]

For the pre-existence of the Messiah, as we have just noted, he had Jewish precedent. But the Apostle was not content to let the Messiah remain, as it were, an isolated figure—simply 'chosen' by God to fulfil an appointed task. He felt the necessity of bringing him into a closer,

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 45–9. Cf. Romans v. 16–19. [2] Phil. ii. 6–8.

or, one might say, an organic, relation to the God whose commission he bore. He habitually speaks of him as 'the *Son* of God', and this term, which, as originally used in the Old Testament, implied no metaphysical relation, but rather the obedience of a trusted servant, undoubtedly takes on another complexion in St. Paul's usage. The most important step in the development of his conception would appear to have been the identification of the pre-existent or eternal Christ with the personified Wisdom of God, of which such remarkable expressions are used in *Proverbs* and in the apocryphal *Wisdom of Solomon*. 'The Lord possessed me. . . before his works of old.' 'When he established the heavens, I was there. . . When he marked out the foundations of the earth, then I was by him, as a master-workman, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him' (Proverbs viii. 22–30). 'Wisdom, which is the worker of all things, taught me. . . She is the breath of the power of God, and a pure influence flowing from the glory of the Almighty: therefore can no defiled thing fall into her. For she is the brightness of the everlasting light, the unspotted mirror of the power of God, and the image of his goodness. And being but one, she can do all things; and remaining in herself, she maketh all things new: and in all ages entering into holy souls, she maketh them friends of God, and prophets. . . Wisdom reacheth from one end to another mightily: and sweetly doth she order all things.' [1] Both of these passages must have been familiar to St. Paul, and they help us to understand how he comes, as early as 2 Corinthians, to speak of Christ as 'the image of God', and of 'the glory of God' as reflected 'in the face of Jesus Christ', and to declare, in the later Epistles, that 'in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily' (Col. ii. 9, cf. i. 19). In Colossians, still drawing from the same source, St. Paul describes the cosmic Christ as at once the organ of the divine activity in

[1] *Wisdom of Solomon*, vii. 22, 25, 26; viii. 1.

creation and the sustaining energy of the universe: 'the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through him, and unto him; and he is before all things, and in him all things consist' (i. 15–17).[1] In this context, as already hinted, the expression 'his dear Son', or, as the Revised Version renders it, 'the Son of his love', evidently assumes a special significance. And in Philippians we have the great declaration in which St. Paul, quoting the very words of Isaiah (xlv. 23), expressly vindicates for Jesus the divine title of *Κύριος*, or Lord, which, in the Greek of the Septuagint, is reserved for Yahweh alone: 'Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.' Such a passage sufficiently shows how infinitely more the Lordship of Christ meant for Paul, the Jewish monotheist, than the patronal lordship of a pagan cult for its votaries. It shows us also along what different lines the conception was reached.

But, though he speaks in the same context of Christ's being originally 'in the form of God' and 'counting it not a prize to be on an equality with God', it is to be noted that he never calls him God, as Thomas is made to do in the chapter appended to the Fourth Gospel ('My Lord and my God'). In the very passage just quoted it is God who

[1] The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews states the same position in almost identical terms: 'His Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds; who being the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; having become by so much better than the angels, as he hath inherited a more excellent name than they' (i. 2–5 R.V.).

confers upon the exalted Christ His own divine name, and the confession of Jesus as Lord is itself described as being 'to the glory of God the Father'. So again in Colossians, 'it was the good pleasure of the Father that in him should all the fulness dwell'; and the Son is described there as the agent in creation, but as himself 'the first-born of all creation'. In this way the apostle seeks (shall we say?) to safeguard his inherited monotheism. And there is, of course, the passage in 1 Corinthians where the Lordship of the Son is represented as delegated, and moreover as temporary in its duration. 'When all things have been subjected to him, then shall the Son also himself be subjected to him that did subject all things unto him, that God may be all in all' (xv. 28). In recounting his religious experience, or explaining the nature of such experience in general, Paul is found speaking indifferently of the grace of God or the grace of Christ, the love of God or the love of Christ, the service of God or the service of Christ; but his actual meaning is better conveyed, and the alternative usage thereby explained, in such phrases as 'the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord' (Rom. viii. 39), or 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself' (2 Cor. v. 19). Christ is, as it were, the channel of the divine grace and love; and the frequently recurring formula, 'the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ',[1] is proof, if any were needed, that, for the apostle's own consciousness, the monotheistic background of his faith remained unaffected by any predicates he might apply to Christ, his Lord and Saviour. He tells us, it is true, that in his extremity he 'besought the Lord thrice' for the removal of the thorn in his flesh (2 Cor. xii. 8). But, as has been pointed out, this is an appeal for help against 'a messenger of Satan', and it may be said to belong to the

[1] According to this formula, as J. Weiss points out, Christ is subordinated not only as Son to the Father but as creature to his God. *Urchristenthum*, p. 363.

functions of the exalted Christ to defend his followers against the assaults of the powers of darkness. It is included in his intercessory office. Paul's usual practice in prayer conforms to the precept afterwards laid down by Origen: the petitions are offered to God in Christ's name, or for his sake.

The Wisdom Literature, whose influence in shaping the Pauline Christology we have traced, belonged to Alexandria, that great clearing house of Eastern and Western ideas, and the *Wisdom of Solomon* (written probably about the middle of the first century B.C. or somewhat later) shows at many points the influence of Greek philosophy. The writer's doctrine of the soul and its immortality, for example, is Platonic; and, although the personification of Wisdom goes back to Hebrew sources, the terms in which he describes its all-pervasive action in the world recall the Stoic doctrine of the Pneuma. The complete fusion of Jewish theology and Greek philosophy, by means of an allegorical interpretation of the Old Testament Scriptures, was attempted by Philo, who was an older contemporary of Jesus;[1] and although there is no direct evidence that St. Paul was acquainted with Philo's writings, the ideas with which the two work are so much akin that a summary view of Philo's leading doctrines may help us at this point to understand better the later phases of the Pauline Christology. Although not himself in the highest sense an original thinker, his elaboration of the doctrine of the Logos has given him an important place in the history of religious thought.

Philo's object is to prove the perfect harmony of Greek philosophy and Hebrew theology. In attempting to do so, he starts from the assumption that the Jewish Scriptures,

[1] Born probably about 20 or 30 B.C. He was a member of a deputation of Alexandrian Jews to Caligula in A.D. 40, and describes himself as then an old man.

more especially the five books of Moses, contain a perfect revelation of divine truth. Every word in them, every turn of a phrase, is verbally inspired; and this is equally true, he holds, of the Greek translation. To read this divine truth aright, however, we must penetrate beneath the literal meaning of the narrative or of the ritual details; everything, in fact, is to be taken allegorically or as a symbol. Applying this powerful instrument, Philo has little difficulty in deducing formally from the Old Testament the philosophical doctrines which he had actually appropriated from the Greek philosophers. Moses is thus proved to have been the fountainhead of philosophical wisdom. From him, according to Philo, those other thinkers must have derived the truths which they more or less imperfectly expressed. But Philo's allegorical *tours de force* do not concern us here; his own philosophical positions can be considered apart from this underlying assumption.

Philo retained, of course, the monotheism of his race. The Hebrew records emphasize in many a well-known passage the transcendence and infinite greatness of God, without any suggestion that such emphasis could affect in the least the conception of his direct activity, whether as Creator or as providential Governor of the world. The philosophers of Philo's time—and of the centuries before and after—were also deeply impressed by the transcendence of the divine; but for these thinkers this transcendence meant remoteness, inaccessibility, even unknowableness. Hence when Philo came, as a philosopher, to consider the relation of God to the world, the fact most present to his mind was the gulf between the two. God was so great as to be beyond the reach of our thought, exalted beyond any categories we could frame. In strictness he remains for us, Philo says, ἄποιος, without qualities; for whatever quality we might predicate of him would be a limitation. He is more excellent than virtue or than knowledge, more excellent even than Plato's Idea of Goodness or of Beauty.

We can know, in short, only *that* God is: *what* he is, remains entirely dark. 'Being' is the only predicate we can strictly or properly apply to him—the 'I am' of Israel's God. Philo himself, when he is speaking philosophically, regularly makes use of the expressions ὁ ὤν or τὸ ὄν.

It is, of course, only *propter excellentiam*, as Erigena afterwards said, that all finite predicates are denied of God; and Philo is conscious of no inconsistency when, at other times, he describes God as the sum and source of all perfection, as the Being which contains all reality in itself, as the ultimate and only real cause. So regarded, God is, for Philo, 'the transcendent ground of everything actual; He can be known only in his effects, and defined only as the universally active force.'[1] God is thus everywhere by his power, but nowhere in his essence. He can act in or upon the world only through intermediaries, for the perfect cannot come into direct contact with matter: it would be defiled thereby. It is at this point that Philo develops his theory of the Divine Powers (δυνάμεις), or modes of manifestation, through which God operates in the universe. These are conceived by him partly on the analogy of the Platonic Ideas and the generative Reason of the Stoics, immanent and everywhere active in the world; partly on the analogy of the angels or messengers of God in later Judaism. From the latter point of view, they are described as servants or ministers of God, his ambassadors, mediators between God and the finite world, and tend accordingly to be hypostatized as independent personalities. On the other hand, their designation as Powers seems to negative such independence and to make them simply determinate modes of the Divine activity. Philo's view of them wavers between these two conceptions, and we may agree with Zeller that this is in the circumstances unavoidable. 'Otherwise the intermediary rôle assigned to them would be forfeited—their double

[1] Zeller, *Phil. der Griechen*, iii. 2, p. 358; ed. 4, p. 406.

nature, by reason of which they are to be identical with God, so that a participation in the Deity may be possible to the finite, and, on the other hand, different from him, so that the Deity, notwithstanding this participation, may remain free from all contact with the world.'[1] Philo's theory is, in fact, the acknowledgement of a difficulty rather than any solution of it.

These powers are indefinitely numerous, and, although Philo occasionally attempts to arrange them in a systematic order, he reaches no settled result. He usually, however, distinguishes two supreme Powers—Goodness and Might[2]—which it is obviously difficult to conceive otherwise than as two aspects of the divine nature. Through his goodness God created the world; by his might he rules it. To the former power or attribute Philo applies the term θεός, for the latter he uses κύριος; and (although his usage is not consistent) both are usually represented as united in the Logos. The Logos thus becomes the supreme or immediate manifestation of the divine nature or, as Philo designates it on occasion, 'the first-born son of God,' 'the second God'—neither uncreated like God, nor created after the manner of finite things, seeing that it was through its instrumentality that God created the world (or rather, according to Philo's belief, formed it out of indeterminate formless matter). As thus, in every sense, a Mediator between God and the world, the Logos may also be regarded as the Representative of the world in its relation to God; and in this capacity Philo speaks of it (or him) as 'the high-priest' who comes before God to make intercession for the creation.[3] In other respects

[1] Zeller, *op. cit.*, p. 413.

[2] ἀγαθότης and ἀρχή, εὐεργεσία and ἡγεμονία, or ἡ χαριστική and ἡ βασιλική.

[3] So in a notable passage quoted by Professor H. A. A. Kennedy, *Philo's Contribution to Religion*, p. 167, from *Quis Rer. Div. Haeres*, 205: 'The Father, who has begotten all things, granted as his choicest privilege to his chief messenger and most august Logos, that he should stand in the

Philo's account of the Logos runs mainly on Platonic lines. The Logos is the Idea of Ideas, the non-sensuous world of archetypes which is the pre-condition of the actual world of sense. As Philo himself puts it (after Plato): 'When God designed to create this visible world, he first formed the ideal world, so that he might produce the bodily by the use of an incorporeal and most God-like pattern, the latter modelled on the earlier, and intended to contain as many classes of things apprehensible by the senses as there were Ideas in the archetypal world!'[1] This is certainly one sense in which the Logos may be said (but, even so, metaphorically) to be the instrument of creation, and thus intermediate between God and the created sensible world. The ideal or intelligible world is the divine plan of the actual world—the *universalia ante res* of the Scholastics, as they pre-existed in the mind of God. But, if this scheme of *genera* and *species* is the real philosophical meaning of the Logos, how can we attribute agency to such a logical abstraction? The lack of creative dynamic in the Ideas was the conspicuous defect of the original philosophy of Plato, and it is no less conspicuous in Philo's adaptation. Agency can only be attributed to a purposive Mind which conceives the plan. And, above all, if such is the bare scientific truth about the Logos, what possible sense can we put upon the highly personalized religious terms in which Philo habitually speaks of it—as the priestly intercessor, in the passage quoted above, or elsewhere, repeatedly, as identical with Conscience, the divine agent in the soul, convicting of sin and at the same time revealing the path to the higher life?

midst between the Creator and the created. Thus he is, on the one hand, always the suppliant for transient mortals in presence of the Immortal, and, on the other, the ambassador of the Ruler to his subject . . . being neither uncreated like God nor created like you, but standing between the two extremes as a pledge to both.' The terms ἱκέτης and παράκλητος are both applied by Philo to the Logos. Cf. V. Mos. 673.

[1] *De Opif. Mundi*, 16 (quoted by Kennedy, *op. cit.*, p. 65).

The truth seems to be, as Professor Kennedy points out in his discriminating study of Philo's religion, that 'in spite of his zeal for cosmological and psychological speculations after the model of his Greek masters, the crucial elements in his view of God and man belong to the spiritual heritage of his race. . . . He is content to accept, as one of the most inspiring factors in the relation of God to his creatures, the unceasing outflow of a Divine purpose of mercy, initiating all that is good in human life and opening up the highest possibilities to those who are conscious of nothing but imperfection'.[1] For Philo as a religious thinker the Logos is, fundamentally, just the expression of this divine purpose of mercy, the divine grace, the spirit of God guiding men through the ages into all truth. Philo is fond of emphasizing the grace or generosity of God; φιλόδωρος, 'Thou who lovest to give', is one of his favourite epithets. And, like the Prophets of his race, he makes these assertions without scruple of God himself: 'the Ruler himself draws nearer': 'some souls He goes out to meet': 'I will come to thee and will bless thee': 'So large is the grace of the Cause who anticipates our hesitations, and goes out to bestow the completest benefits upon the soul'. Nevertheless, since the days of the Prophets, the world—Jewish as well as Greek—had become obsessed by the idea of the distance, the infinite transcendence, of the divine. In the case of Judaism, 'the stress laid upon the Holiness of God in the post-exilic community gave an impetus to a large number of personifications of the Divine. . . . Further, the dignity of the High Priest had been immensely enhanced, so that, to a degree never before conceived, he stood as mediator between God and the people.'[2] The idea of mediation was everywhere in the air, and so we get in Philo, as later in Christian theology, the figure of 'the second God'. Philo tells us, for example, in another place that 'it is good

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 143. [2] *Ibid.*, pp. 100–1.

for perishable mortals to have the mediating or arbitrating Logos, because of their own awe and shrinking before the Lord of all', and, as we have seen, he actually uses the term 'High Priest' to describe this function of the Logos. From the Epistle to the Hebrews onward, therefore, there can be no doubt that Philo's theory of the Logos exercised an important influence upon the developing Christology of the early Church. But, as regards St. Paul, it seems on the whole most probable that Philo and the apostle moved independently of one another toward similar results.

NOTE

A good illustration of their coincidence, apparently without any direct dependence of one upon the other, is furnished by St. Paul's references to the first and the second Adam. These have a curious parallel in Philo, although there are important differences in detail. In both cases the theory propounded depends on a peculiar exegesis of the account (or rather accounts) of the creation of man in the first and second chapters of Genesis. Philo takes the two narratives, not as two parallel accounts of the same process, but as two distinct acts of creation. According to his theory, as we have seen, God first created the Idea of the world, the 'Kosmos noētos', as the archetype or pattern of the world which we perceive by the senses. Man, therefore, was first created 'after the image of God', that is to say, the generic man, without sex; and only in the second place came the formation, according to that archetype, of individual human beings, male and female. The former Philo calls the heavenly man, the latter the earthly (*ὁ μὲν γάρ ἐστιν οὐράνιος ἄνθρωπος, ὁ δὲ γήϊκος*).[1] St. Paul reverses the order: with him 'the

[1] Philo in his interpretation lays stress on the difference in the verbs used in Genesis i. 27 and Gen. ii. 7. In the first passage we read, 'God *made* (*ἐποίησεν*) man'; in the second, 'God formed (*ἔπλασεν*) man of the dust of the earth'. 'Most clearly', Philo comments, 'does [Moses] show by this that there is an immense difference between the man now "formed" and him who had earlier come into being according "to the image of God". For the man now formed was perceptible by sense . . . composed of body and soul, man or woman, mortal by nature; while

first man is of the earth, earthy (χοϊκός), the second man is from heaven (ἐξ οὐρανοῦ) (1 Cor. xv. 47). But, although Adam's sin preceded the appearance upon earth of the heavenly man, the pre-existent Christ, as 'the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creation', would still be first in Philo's sense. The fact, however, that St. Paul makes such a different use of the contrast would seem to show that he did not derive the idea from Philo. They may both have been drawing from some common source; and this is the more probable since both seem to treat the idea of the heavenly man as something familiar, that does not stand in need of special explanation.

he who was made after the divine image was a sort of idea (ἰδέα τις) or class or soul, apprehensible only by thought, incorporeal, neither male nor female, and by nature immortal'.

CHAPTER XV

GENTILE CHRISTIANITY AND THE MYSTERY RELIGIONS

The other condition which determined the transformation of the original gospel was the fact that St. Paul was preaching to a polytheistic world. It would really seem, we have said, as if, but for Paul and the Gentile mission, Jewish Christianity would, with the lapse of time and the fading of the apocalyptic hope, have been gradually reabsorbed by orthodox Judaism. It is significant, therefore, in this connexion that, as we learn from a passing note in Acts, 'The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch'[1] —as if the adherents of the new faith were there for the first time clearly differentiated from any merely Jewish sect. The name, so applied, would naturally mean those who professed allegiance to Christ as their Saviour-god. 'In Antioch', says Professor Lake, emphasizing the new departure, 'Jesus became the divine centre of a cult.' 'It is incredible,' he adds, 'that he should have been so regarded by the Jews in Jerusalem.'[2] The statement perhaps ignores factors working at Jerusalem in a similar direction;[3] but it is certainly true that the Messiah, in spite of the central role he is called upon to play at the time of the End, is not, as such, an object of worship; and if by a God we mean an object of worship, there is in a strictly monotheistic religion no room for any subordinate deity. But in the Hellenistic world, where, as St. Paul says, 'there are gods many, and lords many' (1 Cor. viii. 6), the case was very different. As against that indiscriminate polytheism, Paul defines the Christian position as being that 'to us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we unto him; and one

[1] xi. 26. [2] *Landmarks in the History of Early Christianity*, p. 73.
[3] Cf. Johannes Weiss, *Urchristenthum*, pp. 25–6.

Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we through Him'. And whereas the formula of the first disciples was, as we have seen, that 'Jesus is the Christ', for St. Paul the formula of the Christian confession and the burden of his own preaching was, that 'Jesus Christ is Lord'. The term Kyrios or Lord was in common use throughout the Greek-speaking world as a divine title, and was doubtless from the first applied in that sense to Jesus by Gentile converts, on the analogy of the saviour-god of the mystery religions with which they were familiar. Its use was in a manner forced upon Paul and the other mission-preachers by the Hellenistic environment in which they worked: they were obliged to speak in language which their hearers could understand.

The contrast in this respect between the hereditary monotheism of the primitive Jewish Christians and the polytheistic antecedents of the Gentile converts is an illuminative fact, to be constantly borne in mind by any one trying to trace the history of Christian belief about God and Christ. 'It is commonly taken for granted', says Dr. McGiffert, 'that the original object of worship in the primitive Gentile Christian communities was the God of the Jews—the one Almighty God, creator and ruler of the world—and that, after a time, there was associated with him the Lord Jesus Christ, a subordinate being, who was gradually raised to the rank of divinity, and finally declared to be true God, 'one in substance with the Father.' [1] This may have been the case with the earliest Gentile converts, drawn probably from the circle of 'God-fearers', who had already attached themselves to the Jewish synagogues as adherents, although not actually proselytes. But, as regards the mass of converts drawn directly from the Gentile world, such a conception almost certainly reverses the actual order of the facts. For the Gentile converts the primary object of worship was, naturally, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the saviour-God.

[1] *The God of the Early Christians*, pp. 43–4.

Allegiance to such a saviour-God did not mean the denial of other deities, or the identification of the particular saviour with the supreme God, as monotheistically conceived. Although there was, it is true, an unmistakable drift towards monotheism throughout the pagan world in the first and second centuries of our era, that movement was confined to philosophic, or at least to cultured, circles. To the ordinary man it appeared an abstract speculation, which had little or no relation to his religious needs. The universal craving was for personal 'salvation'; and salvation meant primarily the assurance of a happy immortality, deliverance from the fear of death. Christ was accepted by the average Gentile convert as such a saviour, in much the same spirit as that observable in the initiate of these other cults. The preaching of the original Christian missionaries no doubt proceeded on a monotheistic basis. We have an authentic statement of it in St. Paul's earliest epistle, where he reminds the Thessalonians of the manner of his own preaching and its results: 'how ye turned unto God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from Heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivereth us from the wrath to come.' As a Jew, he could not but start with the national antithesis between the one true God and the idols of the heathen; but, even so, the gist of the new faith—certainly the gist as it must have appeared to his converts—is contained in the latter part of the statement, ending as it does on the note of 'deliverance'. And if Jesus was naturally, here and everywhere, in the forefront of the preaching, it was equally natural that the monotheistic background would seem to the hearers a matter of little practical moment. Hence, Dr. McGiffert concludes, whereas 'hitherto historians have confined themselves to the problem: how to explain the addition of the worship of Christ to the worship of God', in the case of the early Gentile Christians, 'another problem

equally pressing is how to explain the addition of the worship of God to the worship of Christ.'[1]

So much has been written in recent years upon the mystery religions and their influence in shaping Christian ritual and creed that some account of the nature of these cults must be given, if we are to form a reasoned opinion on the subject. We find such mystery-cults, grafted upon the worship of Demeter and Dionysus, existing in ancient Greece as early as the beginning of the sixth century B.C., if not earlier. Greek religion was in the main a public cult, a religion pre-eminently of the *polis* or city, and, in some cases, of a national or panhellenic character. The worship of the greater Olympians was, in a manner, an idealization and consecration of the unity of Hellas and Hellenic civilization. It is only necessary to mention the Delphic oracle of Apollo and the great games at Olympia; and in that spirit, after the Persian wars, the victors of Plataea raised an altar to Zeus Eleutherios, the god of Hellenic freedom. Such a civic or national religion finds its natural expression in public ceremonials of an imposing kind. The ritual was, no doubt, calculated to promote in the worshipper a spirit of piety towards the higher powers; and the gods, as guardians of the state, being also the defenders of law and morality, the act of worship was fitted at the same time to keep awake his sense of social and family duty. But of personal and individual religion, in the sense of intimate communion with the unseen powers, there is little trace. The mystery cults sought to satisfy the desire for such communion, the desire to establish some personal relation with the divine. The Homeric picture of Hades and the strengthless heads of the dead tended to make the idea of a future life entirely inoperative. But the votaries of the mysteries were, above all else, preoccupied with that question, and sought accord-

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 63–4.

ingly to establish such relations with the god whose service they entered as would ensure for them a happy destiny beyond the grave. This craving for personal salvation mediated by a saviour-god is the central feature of the mystery religions from first to last.

The Eleusinian mysteries, annually celebrated at Eleusis near Athens, were still under the aegis of the state religion. Demeter (meaning etymologically earth-mother) was originally perhaps a goddess of vegetation, and with her daughter Persephone (worshipped in Attica as κόρη, the maiden), symbolized the mystery of nature's annual death and resurrection. The return of Persephone from the underworld is the yearly miracle of the spring.[1] We find the beautiful myth of the Mother and the Maid, with its application to human fate, in one of the so-called Homeric hymns, not later than 600 B.C. The hymn refers to Demeter's rites and solemn mysteries as already established. 'Blessed among men upon the earth is he who has seen these things, but he that is uninitiate in the rites and has no part in them has never an equal lot in the cold place of darkness'. There has been much discussion as to what was actually seen and done or taught in the mysteries. As regards the Eleusinian mysteries, we may safely accept Aristotle's statement that there was no definite doctrinal instruction. 'The initiated', he says, 'do not learn what they must do, but feel certain emotions and are put in a certain suitable frame of mind.' The means by which this frame of mind was induced consisted, we gather, of a mystery-play in which scenes from the myth of Demeter were represented, such as the abduction of the daughter, the sorrow and long search of the mother, the holy marriage of reconciliation, and possibly the birth

[1] 'The Eleusinian mysteries arose from an original pre-Grecian Agrarian festival. The rites show that [they] were originally a feast of fertility and purification having reference to the autumn sowing which was immediately at hand.' Nilsson, *A History of Greek Religion*, p. 211.

of a holy infant. The whole was prefaced by a simple form of sacrament, in which each of the initiated partook of the sacred gruel, which the mourning Demeter in the story bade to be prepared for her when she broke her nine days' fast. Certain sacred things were also shown, 'To imagine the thrill and the force of these rites,' says Dr. Farnell, 'we must imagine a mediaeval passion-play performed with surpassing stateliness and solemnity. Those who saw these things in the Hall of the Mysteries at Eleusis may have carried away with them an abiding sense of a closer communion with the benign powers of the nether-world, and a resulting hope of a happier posthumous lot.' [1]

An important fact in connexion with these mysteries was, that the right of entrance was not limited by kinship or local citizenship, as was usually the case in the cults of the ancient world. The Eleusinian Mysteries were open to the whole of Greece. Women as well as men were admitted, even slaves; only those guilty of blood were excluded. The application for admission was in each case a personal and purely voluntary act; each initiate 'was there for the good of his individual soul'.[2] They represent, therefore, a type of religious community new to the ancient world. 'The tie which binds the worshipper to his god and to his fellow worshippers is no longer that of blood or of common political interests, but the higher one of a common religious experience.' [3]

This is still more true of the Orphic brotherhoods, based on the cult of Dionysus, which established themselves in Magna Graecia and soon began to spread through the whole Greek world. The worship of Dionysus was an orgiastic or highly emotional cult, perhaps of Phrygian origin, which, according to tradition, reached Greece by way of Thrace in post-Homeric times and rapidly estab-

1 Farnell, *Outline History of Greek Religion*, pp. 85–6.
2 Farnell, *Higher Aspects of Greek Religion*, p. 138.
3 Allan Menzies, *History of Religion*, p. 298.

lished itself in popular favour. The general character of the worship is well-known—the madness into which the Maenads worked themselves, dancing in wild procession through the mountains at midnight, with blazing pine torches, shrill music and strange cries, till their frenzy culminated in rending a living victim limb from limb, and tearing its warm flesh with their teeth. In the ecstasy of this savage sacrament the worshippers felt themselves, for the moment, mystically one with the god of whose body and blood they had partaken. From this ecstatic experience the Orphic brotherhoods derived the central tenet of their religious creed, the kinship of God and man and the heavenly origin of the soul. The human soul, though condemned by its own pre-natal sin to the prison-house of the body, has before it the goal of final release and re-admission to the divine fellowship from which it has fallen. The object of the mysteries was to point out the way of salvation and release. Rules of life were laid down for the avoidance of ceremonial impurity or uncleanness, including abstinence from animal food and various other articles of diet, as well as regulations concerning dress and conduct in general. On the observance of these rules, and the elaborate purifications required to wash away transgressions, the initiate based his hope of a blessed immortality; as it runs on the golden tablets recently discovered in tombs in Southern Italy—'Out of the pure I come, pure Queen of them below. I have paid the penalty for deeds unrighteous. I have flown out of the sorrowful weary wheel. . . . And now I come, a suppliant to holy Persephone, that of her grace she may receive me to the seats of the blessed'.

The sense of sin, the preoccupation with the future life, and the craving for personal salvation, all mark out the Orphic faith as something new in the Western world, although, in the doctrine of transmigration and the general conception of salvation as deliverance from the 'weary

wheel' of mundane existence, it has manifest affinities with Eastern thought. Opposed as it is to what we are accustomed to regard as the Hellenic spirit, Orphism, through its influence on Plato, became an important factor in later religious thought. It is also the first example in the West of a missionary creed, proclaiming its saving message to the whole world without distinction of race. Orphic brotherhoods soon spread. In the fourth century, as we learn from Plato, the Orphic propagandists were often a disreputable set of quacks; but we may believe that, with the first enthusiasts, this was not so. As a matter of fact we have the testimony of Plutarch that these Bacchic-Orphic societies continued to be channels of religious stimulus and consolation centuries later, under the Roman Empire. Each such religious society or guild had its rites of initiation and its sacraments, in which the members were mystically united with the tutelary deity to whom they looked for succour. As the god had suffered and died, and yet triumphed over death, so his faithful worshippers, being made partakers of his suffering, would share also in his final triumph.

Besides the mysteries which took their rise in Greece, there were others, of Eastern origin, which in the later pagan centuries had naturalized themselves in Rome and throughout the Roman Empire—the Phrygian cult of Cybele, the Great Mother, the Egyptian mysteries of Isis, and last of all those of Mithra, which probably first took shape in Asia Minor, though the god himself descended from Persian, or even Indian sources. The worship of the Magna Mater was brought to Rome in 204, in the stress of the Second Punic War. Isis followed in the course of the second century B.C. Before the close of the Republic both had taken firm hold of the popular imagination; and under the Empire, for more than three centuries, they formed the chief support of an expiring Paganism in the struggle with Christianity. The worship of the Phrygian

Mother of the gods, with the death and resurrection of the youthful Attis as the centre of its ritual, was originally a vegetation or fertility cult, and the ritual was especially gross and barbarous. The myth of Isis and Osiris also represented at first the drama of the agricultural year, as determined by the rise and fall of the Nile. But in the course of centuries these oriental cults had to a large extent left behind them the primitive naturalism in which they had their rise. In the last age of Paganism, as Dr. Dill says,[1] the Magna Mater 'became the universal mother, full of tenderness and grace, and giving peace through her cleansing rites', while Isis, Queen of Heaven, with the infant Horus in her arms, has all the features of the Catholic Madonna and Child. As Plutarch beautifully puts it in his religious interpretation of the myth: 'She did not forget the struggles and trials which she had endured, nor permit oblivion and silence to overtake her wanderings and many deeds of wisdom and courage; but, intermingling images and hints and representations of her erstwhile sufferings with her most holy rites, she consecrated thereby lessons in pity and consolation in suffering for men and women overtaken by like misfortunes'![2]

Can we wonder, then, that many a stricken spirit found comfort in the adoration of Isis? We need but read the words in which Apuleius makes Lucius address her, in his prayer of thanksgiving after his admission to the mysteries: 'O holy and blessed dame, the perpetual comfort of human kind, who by thy bounty and grace nourishest all the world, and bearest a great affection to the adversities of the miserable, as a loving mother . . . thou art she that puttest away all storms and dangers from man's life, by stretching forth

[1] *Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius*, p. 559.

[2] *De Is. et Osir.* 27. Cf. Epistle to the Heb. iv. 15. 'For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help us in time of need.'

thy right hand'.[1] *Compassion*, a fellow-feeling for human suffering, was what men looked for in their saviour-god—'the kindness of God our Saviour and his love toward man' (φιλανθρωπία) as we find it expressed in the Epistle to Titus (iii. 4.). The widespread cult of Aesculapius, the divine physician, is symptomatic of the same attitude of mind. 'Thou that lovest compassion', says a suppliant, 'the supreme Gods have granted thee as a mighty boon to mortals, as a refuge from their sorrows.'[2]

The mysteries exemplify also the religious syncretism which was so marked a feature of the time. The identification of the gods of different races as the same deity under different names is a step towards the perception of the divine unity, whether monotheistically or pantheistically conceived. So Isis reveals herself to Lucius as the goddess 'adored throughout all the world, in diverse manners, in various customs, and under many names. The Phrygians, eldest born of men, call me the Mother of the gods at Pessinus; the Athenians, sprung from their own soil, call me Cecropian Minerva; the sea-girt Cyprians, Paphian Venus; the arrow-bearing Cretans, Dictymnian Diana; the Sicilians who speak three tongues, the Stygian Proserpine; the Eleusinians, their ancient goddess Ceres; others, Bellona, Hecate, or Rhamnasia; while the Ethiopians, illumined by the earliest rays of the rising sun, and the Egyptians, excellent in all kinds of ancient doctrine, ... call me by my true name, Queen Isis' (c. 47). In the prayer of thanksgiving, she is acclaimed as the moving and directing spirit of Universal Nature: 'To thee the stars give answer and the elements are obedient; through thee the seasons return and the gods rejoice. At thy commandment the winds blow, the clouds nourish the earth, the seeds prosper, and the fruits increase. The birds of the air, the beasts of the hill, the serpents of the den, and the fishes of the sea tremble at thy majesty' (c. 48).

[1] *Meta.* c. 48.

[2] Farnell's *Greek Hero-Cults*, p. 277.

Bitterly as they were attacked by the Christian Fathers, it is evident that these cults ministered to the same needs as were more effectually met by the religion which supplanted them, and that, indeed, both in sentiment and in ritual, they had many features in common with it. The death and resurrection, which formed the kernel of the Pauline message, must have sounded to his Greek hearers like a variation on a familiar theme, or rather let us say, like the fulfilment of an ancient story, brought suddenly home to them and invested with historical reality. If they accepted the new faith, they must have accepted it, not as something absolutely new and strange, but because it appealed to them as the realization of that which they and their fellows had been dimly seeking along more or less similar paths. In all understanding there is a process of assimilation involved; and accordingly the first Gentile converts must inevitably have begun by interpreting the new Gospel in terms of that with which they were familiar. The analogy of the Mysteries lay ready to hand, and in this sense it may be said with truth that the mystery-religions formed a preparation for Christianity. They provided, as it were, the soil and atmosphere in which it could take root and grow. 'It was as a mystery religion,' says Dean Inge, 'that Europe accepted Christianity. . . . Just as the Jewish Christians took with them the whole framework of apocalyptic Messianism, and set the figure of Jesus within it, so the Greeks took with them the whole scheme of the mysteries, with their purifications and fasts, their idea of a mystical brotherhood, and their doctrine of 'salvation' (*σωτηρία* is essentially a mystery word) through membership in a divine society, worshipping Christ as the patronal deity of their mysteries.' [1]

It is not necessary to suppose that St. Paul derived any important elements of his own religious creed from the mysteries. We have seen how his conception of the exalted

[1] *Outspoken Essays* (First Series), p. 227.

Christ, the divine Son, represents a natural evolution along the lines of apocalyptic Messianism and the Alexandrian Wisdom-theology, while the intensely personal character of his Christ-mysticism, as concentrated upon the figure of the historic Jesus, whom he had never known in the flesh, had its root in his own ecstatic religious experience. In general, it may be said with truth that the framework of his religious beliefs remained to the end essentially Hebraic. It was not for nothing that he repeatedly describes himself as 'a Hebrew of the Hebrews', 'as touching the law, a Pharisee'. But, although this was true of himself personally—perhaps just because he felt so sure of himself in that respect—we find him using the terminology of the mysteries with the utmost freedom in writing to his Gentile converts. It was natural that he should talk to them in language which they understood, and was doubtless part of his declared policy. 'I am become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some' (1 Cor. ix. 22). Partly, however, we can hardly doubt, he used the terminology because he found it a really appropriate expression of what he meant to convey. Although he had reached his doctrine independently, and was conscious in connexion with it of no borrowings from pagan sources, there existed nevertheless a real affinity in important respects between the gospel he preached and the mysteries on whose language he drew. And so, as Dean Inge says, 'St. Paul, who was ready to fight to the death against the Judaizing of Christianity, was willing to take the first step, and a long one, towards the paganizing of it.'[1]

The mystery-cults were in their essence religious societies of brotherhoods, the members of which were bound together and mystically united with the god by sacraments of initiation and communion. *Sacramentum* meant originally the soldier's oath of allegiance, and the

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 228.

initiation rites corresponded closely to the original sense of the word. The candidate, on his admission to the service of the god or goddess, took upon himself all the obligations of that service. He pledged himself to order his life henceforward in accordance with the divine requirements. The stains of his old life were washed away in baptism or some similar rite of purification; and he was, in the current phrase 'born again', and became by 'divine grace' a 'new creature'. These familiar New Testament phrases are part of the vocabulary of the mysteries. There followed for the initiated the most sacred rite of all, the sacramental meal in which the worshippers celebrated their mystical union with the saving deity, being made actual partakers of his being, and sharers, therefore, in his immortal blessedness.

It would be superfluous to elaborate in detail the parallel between these sacraments and the Christian rites of Baptism and the Supper. The Church Fathers themselves admitted the striking resemblances, accounting for them by the hypothesis that the similarities constituted a deliberate and Satanically inspired parody of the Christian rites. The two rites in question formed, as Professor Bacon says, 'the true Ur-evangelium, the true beginning of the Gospel. The sacraments came first, the literature came afterwards. It grew up around the sacraments, interpreting and enforcing their lessons.' [1]

As has been already said, the question of conscious borrowing is one which need not be raised. The question rather is as to the sense in which these rites were understood by the average Gentile Christians of the first century. Was the early Christian conception of these rites essentially different from the pagan conception of their, to outward seeming, very similar ceremonies? Was the Christian conception purely spiritual in its nature, or was it not rather the case that the rites tended to be considered,

[1] *Jesus and Paul*, pp. 9–10.

both by pagans and by Christians, as possessing in themselves a quasi-magical efficacy? As regards the pagans, we shall probably be ready to admit—to suspect, if not to assume—that they regarded the ceremonies in this light; and we know the superstitions which gathered round the Christian sacraments in the medieval Church. But Protestant writers have for long been accustomed to draw an idealized picture of primitive Christianity. In their revolt against certain doctrines and practices of the Roman Church, they have claimed to be merely returning to the spirituality and simplicity of apostolic and sub-apostolic times, and to be rejecting only the perversions of the Gospel in a later age. Impartial investigation, however, hardly bears out this reading of history. After all, the Roman Church remains the most important representative of historical Christianity; and, however we may be repelled by many of its dogmas, it is through it that the development of Christian doctrine and practice must be traced. Historical probability suggests, therefore, that, in the sacramentarianism which Protestants condemn, the Roman doctrine may stand nearer to the conceptions and general religious outlook of the first Christian believers than the symbolic and purely spiritual view for which Protestantism contends.

If we consider the question in the light of the theological and cosmical beliefs of the time—the demonology, for example, so universally prevalent—and in the light of the terms in which the subject is discussed by early Christian writers themselves, we shall hardly conclude that Baptism, for example, was regarded by them simply as an outward symbol of the spiritual change which the New Testament writers call *μετάνοια*, repentance or change of mind. The Baptism of John is described as 'a baptism of repentance unto remission of sins', and, as an Anglo-Catholic writer puts it, 'we need not doubt that he and his disciples believed that this was really effected by the

act; the distinction between a declaratory symbol and an efficacious sacrament is too subtle to be grasped by unreflective enthusiasts, such as were those who thronged to hear the Baptist's preaching, and is in any case alien to ancient modes of thought. This "remission of sins", it would seem, had an eschatological orientation and purpose. Those who received it believed that they had been thereby invested with an "invisible spiritual character", which would be their passport through the terrors of the End, and would ensure their entrance into the calm haven of the Messianic millennium.'[1] The Gentile converts to Christianity, we may be sure, were no more likely than those whom John baptized to distinguish between a declaratory symbol and an efficacious sacrament. How else can we understand the stress which the early Church laid upon the rite as unconditionally necessary to salvation? 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.'[2] The Fourth Evangelist underlines the Church doctrine of his time by putting these words into the mouth of Jesus. To the same effect, Cyril of Jerusalem, writing on the subject in the fourth century, declares: 'If a man receive not baptism, he has not salvation, excepting only the martyrs, who, even without water, enter the Kingdom'. Only so, too, can we understand the superstitious practices which grew up in connexion with the rite. A man's past sins were all washed away, but baptism was a sacrament which could not be repeated. What, then, if after baptism a man should fall into fresh transgressions? The original supposition may have been that one who had been thus admitted to the fellowship of 'the saints' would be proof henceforth against the wiles of the devil. But, if so, experience soon falsified this too sanguine expectation,

[1] Dr. Norman Powell Williams in *Essays Catholic and Critical*, p. 409, in an Essay on the 'Origin of the Sacraments'.

[2] John iii. 5.

and the question of post-baptismal sin is already debated in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The author sees no hope for any who thus fall away: for such 'there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgement, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries'.[1] To avoid so terrible a prospect, many therefore felt it to be the part of prudence to defer baptism till as late in life as possible. The Emperor Constantine, as we know, was baptized on his deathbed. On the other hand, the danger of dying unbaptized led to the practice of infant baptism, often administered with the most unseemly haste. The Church eventually sought to relieve these difficulties by a distinction between deadly and venial sins and by the institution of the sacrament of Penance. The grossly superstitious and materialistic view of the ordinance which these anxieties disclose need not be enlarged on here. But they are illuminating side-lights on the conception of the rite which prevailed in the Church from the beginning. That it should be so conceived was entirely natural, indeed inevitable in the circumstances of the time. 'The Christian religion', says Harnack, 'was intelligible and impressive owing to the fact that it offered men sacraments. Without its mysteries, people would have found it hard to understand the new religion.' And after citing a number of utterances of the early Fathers and others on the subject, he feels 'driven to conclude that Christianity has become a religion of magic with its centre in sacramental mysteries. *Ab initio sic non erat* is the protest that will be entered. From the beginning it was not so. Perhaps. But one must go far back to find that beginning, so far back that this extremely brief period now eludes our search entirely'.[2]

It is interesting to note how the perception of this historical necessity has influenced the discussion of the

[1] Heb. vi. 4–8; x. 26–31.
[2] *Expansion of Christianity*, i. 287–93.

relation of the mystery religions to Christianity or of Christianity to the mystery religions. At first the majority of Christian writers were inclined to reject indignantly the idea of any kinship between the two; and they had a certain justification for their indignation in the extreme form in which the dependence of Christianity on the mystery cults was first presented. But, as the discussion has broadened, and extreme positions on either side have been abandoned, the general conclusion reached has been rather the recognition of a common fund of ideas than any proof of explicit borrowing by the one from the other. Christian writers, sufficiently broad to be historically minded, are ready to admit that the Mysteries 'smoothed the way for the spread of Christianity'; [1] and Dr. Williams, whom we have quoted above, declares that, 'viewed from the standpoint of divine providence, they may have been, like the Levitical ordinances, types, and foreshadowings of "good things to come"'.[2]

[1] Percy Gardner in Hastings, *E. R. E.*, ix. 82.
[2] *Essays Catholic and Critical*, p. 397.

CHAPTER XVI

THE FOURTH GOSPEL

In Christology one step remained to be taken. The Fourth Gospel is the Life of Jesus, re-written at the close of the first century in the spirit of St. Paul's conception, as the conscious progress of a divine Being across this earthly stage, and expressed for the Greek-speaking world in terms of the current Logos philosophy. The scattered intimations of St. Paul, drawn from the Hebrew doctrine of the Wisdom, when harmonized or developed into their consequences, yield for the writer the stupendous dogma of the Incarnate Word; and his gospel, a work of supreme religious genius, became the main factor in determining the subsequent formulation of the Church's creed.

The Gospel is not in itself a philosophical treatise, and the technical term, the Logos, so prominent in the Prologue, is nowhere repeated in the body of the narrative. It appears again, however, in the opening verses of the First Epistle, and there can be no doubt that it is deliberately used by the author to give us the keynote of the whole work. He borrows the term from Philo, and, as he offers us no detailed philosophical definition, he evidently implies that its general import will be familiar to his readers. There has been considerable argument in recent years about the extent of his dependence upon Philo. The antecedents of the Johannine doctrine are so clearly discernible in Paul that it would be misleading to suppose that, by the adoption of Philo's term, the Evangelist meant to identify himself with any of the details of Philo's theory, so far as these differ from the Apostle's conception. As Dean Inge concisely puts it, 'the Logos Christology is already present in St. Paul's Epistles—the name only is wanting'.[1] In this sense we may even agree with Professor Bacon's

[1] *Legacy of Greece*, p. 35. The essay is reprinted in *The Church and the World*.

statement that 'the name Logos is mere accommodation'.[1] Nevertheless, the function of a name in fixing and defining thought is a commonplace of the schools; and, in this particular case, the importance of the introduction of a term so rich in philosophical associations can hardly be over-estimated.

The wide difference between the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptics was early recognized. Clement of Alexandria, in the latter half of the second century, described it as 'a spiritual Gospel' in contrast to its predecessors, which sought to give 'the bodily things'—the historical facts of the Master's life, as tradition had handed them down. The Fourth Evangelist does not profess to give an exhaustive account of the sayings and doings of Jesus. In his concluding words he expressly disclaims the intention: 'And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that, believing, ye might have life through his name.' His work is thus avowedly a selection, made with a doctrinal purpose, from existing material known to him. He was evidently familiar with the Synoptics as we possess them; and in his narrative he follows, in the main, the scheme which we find there, beginning with John the Baptist and closing with the Passion and the Resurrection. But there are striking divergencies and transpositions, as when he places the episode of the cleansing of the Temple at the outset of Jesus' public teaching, instead of following the traditional account, which regards it as the immediate antecedent and occasion of the action taken against him by the Jewish authorities. That so marked an assumption of Messianic authority should be almost the first public act of Jesus is, of course, quite in keeping with the author's representation of him throughout, as the Incarnate Logos, the only begotten Son, conscious from the first of his own dignity and vocation; but that he places the incident

[1] *Jesus and Paul*, p. 214.

where he does is characteristic of the freedom with which he treats the traditional material. Much of that material —everything that seems to savour of human weakness or ignorance—is necessarily excluded, as inconsistent with the divine omniscience repeatedly ascribed to Jesus. The Temptation and the Agony in Gethsemane find no place in this Gospel. The Baptism by John, which Matthew already feels to be a derogation from the dignity of the Messiah, is here entirely suppressed. Although the Baptist is introduced prominently in the Prologue and in the first Chapter, he appears there simply as a witness, three times over, to the divine Sonship; he hails Jesus at once, in a profoundly unhistorical phrase, as 'the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world'. Thus the Evangelist 'not only selects his material but adapts and modifies it'.[1]

Seven miracles are enumerated in the Gospel, performed by Jesus, expressly as 'signs' intended to 'manifest his glory' and thereby evoke belief in the spectators (ii. 11). 'It belongs to this view of the miracles as "signs" that their wonderful or supernatural character is strongly emphasized. The Johannine narratives, as compared with the Synoptic, uniformly heighten the miraculous element, so that any attempt to resolve the miracle into a natural event is rendered impossible. The nobleman's son is healed from a distance by the bare word of Christ. The blind man is blind from his birth. Lazarus is not newly dead, like Jairus' daughter and the young man of Nain, but has been in his grave for days, and his body has undergone corruption.'[2] It is noticeable, moreover, that 'the motive of compassion, to which the miracles are for the most part ascribed in the Synoptics, is kept in the background by John. As he conceives them, the works, even when most beneficent, are sheer exhibitions of power, intended by Jesus to inspire belief in his divine claims. The man born blind is restored to sight in order that

[1] E. F. Scott, *The Fourth Gospel*, p. 2. [2] *Ibid*, p. 165.

"the Light of the World" may declare himself; not only so, but his blindness was inflicted on him for this very purpose, "that the works of God should be made manifest" in the miraculous healing (ix. 3). The appeal of the nobleman on behalf of his dying son is answered only because the people will not believe in Christ without the witness of signs and wonders (iv. 48). Even in the story of Lazarus Jesus waits until his friend is dead and buried, in order to enhance the splendour of the ensuing miracle. Its meaning as a work of compassion is altogether secondary to its higher significance as the supreme manifestation of the "glory of God" to those who believe (xi. 40). The miracle at Cana is, in this connexion, the most instructive of all. No ethical motive can be forced into it; the sole end for which it was performed was to reveal the "glory", the divine creative power of Christ.' [1]

The two 'signs' last mentioned, the first and the last of the series, inevitably raise a wider question. In view of the allegorical or symbolic method followed by the Evangelist throughout, can we accept the narrative in these two cases as a record of fact at all? Does he, indeed, intend or expect us to do so? The story of Lazarus is a crucial instance. The most casual reader of the New Testament must have reflected how strange it is that a miracle so stupendous, so far exceeding any of the other instances recorded, should receive not even a passing mention in any of the other Gospels. It is, in fact, as Professor Scott says, 'inconceivable that a miracle of such magnitude, performed in the one week of our Lord's life of which we have a full record, and in presence of crowds of people in a suburb of Jerusalem—a miracle, moreover, which was the immediate cause, according to John, of the Crucifixion—should have been simply passed over by the other Evangelists'.[2] The disregard of historic fact is, in short, so daring, and in this case so easily detected, that it must

[1] E. F. Scott, *op. cit.*, pp. 164–5.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 37.

be taken as an illuminative guide to the writer's habitual procedure. The kernel of the Lazarus story is evidently the spiritual sense of life and resurrection—the idea of 'eternal life', so characteristic of the Johannine writings—which is expressly emphasized, against the literalism of Martha, as a possession independent of bodily life or death. 'Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life. He that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die.' The whole narrative, we cannot but conclude, is for the Evangelist no more than an impressive symbol of the spiritual truth which is central in his own religious experience.[1] Elsewhere throughout his book we can observe the same method at work, even where there is no miracle wrought, and nothing to prevent the incident from having actually taken place—as in the conversation at the well with the woman of Samaria. There is nothing incredible in the occurrence of such an incident in the course of a journey by Jesus and the disciples from Judaea to Galilee; yet the whole story is no more than a dramatic setting for two of the great themes of the Fourth Gospel: the eternal life, of which Christ is the source, and the spiritual character of true religion, emancipated from all racial antagonisms and ceremonial restrictions. 'Believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. . . . The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him.' One can almost see the story shaping itself spontaneously in the author's mind, with all its beautiful details, as he sought appropriate expression for these great ideas.

The frequency with which the Evangelist introduces into his narrative little touches of circumstantial detail has often been the subject of remark. It has, indeed,

[1] Cf. *Idea of Immortality*, p. 144.

been used as an argument for the authenticity of the narratives in question. The writer, it is argued, must either have been present himself at the events which he so vividly reproduces, or he must have been able to draw upon the personal memories of some other eyewitness. But when, as is only right, the character of the Gospel as a whole is considered, I cannot but agree with Professor Scott that the picturesque details, often so effectively introduced, are to be set down 'not to the accurate memory of the eyewitness, but to the fine instinct of the literary artist'. The Fourth Evangelist is a consummate literary artist, not unworthy to be named in the same breath with Plato, and it is surely a hazardous enterprise to seek to detect fragments of hard historical fact in the account, say, of the Supper and the Passion, by a writer whose regard for historical accuracy as such must be measured by his treatment of the narrative in that peculiarly sacred context—e.g. his total suppression of the agony in the garden,[1] and his representation of the soldiers and officers as going backwards and falling to the ground, when Jesus pronounces the words, 'I am He.' There is really no more reason why we should suppose Malchus, the name of the High Priest's servant, to be the record of a personal memory, than that we should suppose Petronius, in the *Gospel of Peter*, to have been the real name of the Captain of the mythical Roman guard supplied by Pilate to guard the Tomb.

If we are to read this Gospel intelligently, we should

[1] The omission was, of course, deliberate; for he was familiar with both Mark and Luke, and he has introduced a reminiscence of the Marcan story in a different setting and with a characteristically different effect. Immediately after the incident of the Greeks who desired to see Jesus, and the declaration that the hour was now come that the Son of Man should be glorified, Jesus says, 'Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour. But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name.' This is immediately followed by a voice from heaven, which, Jesus proceeds to explain, 'came not because of me but for your sakes' (xii. 27–30).

never allow ourselves to forget that the Evangelist uses the historical form throughout as a vehicle for the spiritual truths which he means to convey, and that, in carrying out his purpose, he employs freely the Alexandrian method of allegory and symbol. Readers of his own age would take such a method for granted, and would recognize the symbolic in much that a modern reader, with his different (shall we say more pedestrian) habit of mind, accepts at its face-value as a mere record of facts. Yet it is a tribute to the writer's gift of poetic imagination that, in such cases, we accept so readily his plastic forms as real beings of flesh and blood, who have played their part then and there just as he tells the story; for, in inferior hands, allegory is, as a rule, too transparent to be long endurable. It is with something of a shock that we first awake to the fact that, by 'the woman of Samaria' the writer means us to understand the Samaritan Church—the schismatic religious community of Yahweh worshippers, whose differences from the orthodox Judaism of Jerusalem were so strongly accentuated in the centuries after the Exile. 'The Jews' as the narrative reminds us, 'have no dealings with the Samaritans.' Samaria is specially mentioned in Acts (viii. 5–6), as the district to which Christian missionaries first carried the new faith, when the community in Jerusalem was scattered by persecution after the death of Stephen. The occasion was memorable as the first extension of the Christian Church beyond purely Jewish bounds; and the Evangelist dramatically represents the first step towards the evangelization of the world as prefigured by an incident in the life of Jesus himself. 'Many of the Samaritans', we are told, 'believed on him because of the word of the woman', and 'they besought him to abide with them: and he abode there two days. And many more believed because of his word . . . for we have heard for ourselves', they said, 'and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world.' It is in this connexion that Jesus refers to the fields 'white already

unto harvest', and makes the great declaration, already quoted, of a religion at once spiritual and universal. Clearly, neither the language used, nor the facts stated, are reconcilable with the historicity of the incident as something that took place in the earthly life of Jesus. The Evangelist, writing at the close of the century, has before his eyes the world-wide expansion of the Church during the intervening years. When he wrote, Christ had indeed been preached as 'the Saviour of the world' throughout the greater part of the Roman Empire, and communities of his followers existed in all its principal cities. What the Evangelist desired to do was, in this symbolic fashion, to trace back the whole development to the mind and intention of the Founder himself. And, as the Samaritan incident is placed at the beginning of his ministry, so just before its close, there is introduced the incident of 'certain Greeks among those that went up to worship at the Feast', who came to Philip saying 'Sir, we would see Jesus'; and Jesus receives the request as an intimation that the purpose of his life is now accomplished, and that the end is near. 'The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified.' Once again the horizon widens; the Gentile mission and the illimitable destiny of the Church are revealed for a moment, as the Evangelist sees them, the consummation of a divine purpose, implicit in the Christian message from the beginning.[1]

It is, however, in the discourses which the Evangelist puts into the mouth of Jesus that we are made to realize most vividly how far we have travelled in this Gospel from the Jesus of history. We have seen how, even in the Synoptics, the narrative has often been more or less unconsciously coloured by the religious beliefs of the writers. As it has been put, 'the writers of the Synoptic Gospels were worshippers of Christ, before they became his biographers'.[2]

[1] Cf. E. F. Scott, pp. 109–11.

[2] R. H. Strachan, *The Fourth Evangelist, Dramatist or Historian?*, p. 22.

But the procedure of the Fourth Evangelist is quite conscious and deliberate. His interest is, in the strict sense, not historical at all, but religious and dogmatic; and he has not the slightest scruple in making Jesus the mouthpiece of his own philosophical theology. As Dr. Rawlinson expresses it, 'the affirmations of Christianity in regard to [Jesus] become in this Gospel his own self-affirmations, introduced by the formula, "I am"'.[1] Whether we look at the matter or the manner, what contrast can be greater than that between the discourses of the Johannine Christ and the teachings of Jesus as recorded in the Synoptic Gospels? On the one hand, the simple message of the Kingdom, the lesson of trust in the Father and his unconditional forgiveness of the repentant sinner, the nature of the righteousness required by God—all expressed in clear-cut, ever-memorable sayings, or in the living freshness of the parables; on the other hand, philosophical allegories—long debates, in which Jesus is made to expound the doctrine of His own person in a phraseology which it is impossible to distinguish from that of the Evangelist himself.

There is an almost monotonous uniformity in the method followed. 'A dark saying is thrown out by Jesus which is misapprehended by his hearers, and he then repeats the original saying and proceeds to amplify and explain it. Whole chapters consist of a series of such dark utterances, misunderstood, and then interpreted. A regular method is likewise followed in regard to the miracles. They are performed by Jesus on his own initiative, and embody great spiritual truths which are not apparent to the onlookers. Thus they serve as introductions to the several discussions in which they are expounded in their inward significance.'[2] The feeding of the five thousand, for example, forms the prelude to the

[1] *The New Testament Doctrine of the Christ*, p. 208.
[2] E. F. Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

Eucharistic discourse in the sixth chapter, based on the saying 'I am the Bread of Life', which expounds in mystical terms the Sacrament of the Supper, as understood and practised by the Church in the writer's own day; and, similarly, the polemic against the Jews, which runs through this Gospel, carries back into the life of Jesus the hostile relations of Church and Synagogue at the close of the first century. In the Synoptics, Jesus denounces the self-righteousness and hypocrisy of certain sections of his countrymen, and he is himself criticized for his attitude to the Law. But here, the accusation brought against Jesus is that 'thou being a man makest thyself God' (x. 33). 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' (vi. 52). In other words, the Jewish attack is upon the cardinal doctrine of the Christian faith as it had taken shape in the Church, and upon the Church's central and most sacred rite; and the Christian retort is a pronouncement of doom on the Jewish nation as a whole for their wilful rejection of the Son of God, and their blindness to the testimony of their own Scriptures. The extraordinary bitterness of the epithets exchanged [1] reflects the temper of an age in which the Jewish communities throughout the Empire were the most relentless enemies of the new religion, and the keenest critics of the claims made for Jesus by his followers.

If, then, we take the Evangelist on his own terms, with some understanding of his aims and methods, it remains for us to inquire a little more closely into the significance of his Gospel for the Christians of his own generation, and the secret of its abiding influence on the thought and life of the Church. At an early period the author received the distinctive title of 'the theologian', a term amply justified

[1] 'Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning . . . a liar and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not' (viii. 44–5). Cf. the reference to the Jews of Smyrna as 'a synagogue of Satan' in Rev. ii. 9.

by the part played by his Gospel in shaping the ultimate creed of the Church. Yet his object in writing is not speculation or doctrine for its own sake. His interest is primarily religious and practical, and it is a simple fact of history that this Gospel, more than any other—more, perhaps, than any other book in the New Testament—has been treasured as a manual of devotion throughout the Christian centuries. 'Religious insight and aspiration', says Professor Bacon, 'have never risen to higher flights than those of the Farewell Discourse and the High-priestly prayer.'[1] When he wrote, metaphysical speculation was just beginning to run riot in certain Christian circles, in a way which threatened to cut the new religion loose altogether from its historical foundation in the life and teaching of Jesus. The first Johannine Epistle indicates clearly the nature of the dangers with which the Church was faced, and which it was the main object of the Gospel to combat. There is first of all the Docetic heresy, expressly named in the first Epistle, 'they that confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh'. This is for the writer the denial that strikes at the foundation of the faith; and so strongly does he feel this, that he identifies the denial with the very spirit of Antichrist.[2] It is not at all surprising that Docetism was one of the earliest heresies with which the Christian Church had to contend. The early disciples had thought of their Master as a man of real flesh and blood, who, for his obedience unto death, had been exalted by God to quasi-divine rank and invested with divine functions. Indeed, the whole Pauline doctrine of the pre-existent Christ, the heavenly Being who took upon him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men, obviously raises at once in an

[1] *Jesus and Paul*, p. 230.

[2] This term, more commonly used to designate some great persecutor or great persecuting power, is here for the first time applied to soul-destroying doctrinal error.

acute form the relation of the heavenly Incarnation to the human individual, Jesus of Nazareth. The descent to earth of a divine Being—an idea which, in a polytheistic form, was very familiar to Greek minds—inevitably suggests the unreal or phantasmal character of the bodily form. It is a disguise assumed by the god for a time for certain purposes, and the acts are the acts of the god throughout. Some of Paul's own expressions, it has been noted, have a subtly Docetic flavour. Christ, he says, was 'made *in the likeness* of man' or, again, 'in the likeness of sinful flesh' (Rom. viii. 3), the word ὁμοίωμα which he uses being the word regularly used in the Septuagint for the form in which a divine being—God himself or an angel—appears to mortals. The reference in the passage last quoted to the 'sinfulness' of the flesh suggests the probable reason for the apostle's ambiguous expression. The flesh, with its inclinations, is for him the source of sin, and Christ, as he tells us, 'knew no sin' (2 Cor. v. 21); hence he feels a difficulty in supposing the body of the Lord to have been a human body in the full or ordinary sense of the term, thinking of it rather as the outward semblance of a human body, which left the inmost personality of Christ untouched by human infirmity.

We cannot wonder then, that, when Greek Christians began to philosophize their faith, the Gnostics should for the most part have taken a Docetic view of the life-history narrated in the Gospels. Christ was for them one of the heavenly Aeons or manifestations of the Godhead, of whom, as a divine being, neither suffering nor death could be predicated. The Christ descended upon Jesus, they say, at his Baptism, and left him upon the Cross before the end. As we read in the *Gospel of Peter*, 'Jesus on the Cross kept silence, as one feeling no pain', and towards the end he 'cried out aloud, saying, My power, my power, thou hast forsaken me'. The purpose of Christ in entering this lower world was to impart to men the Gnosis or

higher knowledge, which of itself redeems the human spirit by enlightening it, and emancipating it thereby from the bondage of the flesh and all that pertains to the world of sense and matter. Knowledge means for these thinkers a complete speculative theory of God and the world. The intellectual interest predominates, and a distinction is drawn among believers between the 'pneumatic' or spiritual natures, which are capable of assimilating this esoteric doctrine, and the 'psychic' or common Christians, who cannot rise from faith to knowledge. Gnosticism in general may, accordingly, be described in Harnack's words, as 'an attempt to transform Christianity into a theosophy, that is, a revealed metaphysic and philosophy of history, with a complete disregard of the Jewish Old Testament soil on which it originated'.[1]

Although St. Paul's doctrine of 'the man from heaven' may have given an impetus to Gnostic speculation, it is plain that in such theories the Christ has become, or is rapidly becoming, a purely mythical figure, the Gospel record of whose earthly career can have at most an allegorical significance. In particular, 'the word of the Cross', which to St. Paul was the centre of his faith and the burden of his preaching, has practically dropped out of view. If Christ continues to be called the Redeemer—every religious cult of the period has its Saviour or Redeemer—he is such simply as the supernatural medium of the true Gnosis, a knowledge which in itself is life eternal. But St. Paul's great disciple in Ephesus had not so learned Christ. To him, as to Paul, Christ had been central in his religious experience, not as a shadowy Aeon bearing that name, but as the transfigured image of the Jesus who had lived and taught and died in Palestine. Christianity had originally sprung into being under the inspiration of a Life, and the Evangelist felt instinctively that that Life must remain (in his own phrase) the well of living water from

[1] *History of Dogma*, I. p. 228.

which the Christ-like life must continually be fed. He rightly judged that a Christianity reduced, in Gnostic fashion, to a philosophical allegory, must inevitably cease to be a living force in the world. Hence the motto which he uncompromisingly inscribed on the front of his Gospel: 'And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us.' Hence, also, the physical details which serve in this 'spiritual' gospel to accentuate from time to time the bodily reality of the central Figure, and especially his real death. Jesus sits by the well 'being wearied with his journey', while his disciples were gone away into the city to buy food. The spear-thrust upon the Cross which pierced his side, 'and straightway there came out blood and water', is meant to emphasize the reality of the death; it is solemnly vouched for as historical fact, although the symbolic reference to the sacraments of Baptism and the Supper is unmistakable. So, again, in the post-resurrection narrative, the stress laid on the prints of the nails and the wound in the side. And one can hardly explain otherwise the curious statement—in express contradiction to the Synoptic narrative—that 'Jesus went forth bearing his cross alone'. The incident of Simon of Cyrene, apparently so well authenticated in Mark, had been made the foundation of a Gnostic legend that Simon not only bore the Cross on the way to Golgotha, but was crucified there in Jesus' stead.

As we have already seen, the Fourth Evangelist in his picture of the Incarnate Son has obliterated many of the frankly human features that appeal to us in the Jesus of the Synoptics; and, by his ascription to Jesus of a complete divine foreknowledge, he inevitably detracts from the poignant reality of the history he narrates. His Jesus resembles more the tranquil spectator of a drama than the chief actor in it. He knows the end from the beginning; and what happens, what is said or done (we are told from time to time) takes place 'not for his sake' but for the sake

of the bystanders (xii. 30; xi. 42; vi. 6). The 'aloofness' [1] of Jesus in this respect throughout this Gospel is undeniable. We have seen, too, the profoundly unhistorical character of the discourses, if supposed to be actual utterances of Jesus. But it is our own fault if we imagine that the Evangelist intended to represent them as such. He makes no secret of his method: 'I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all truth . . . He shall glorify me, for he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.' These words of Jesus in the Farewell discourse, with the profound doctrine of the Spirit which underlies them, sufficiently indicate the writer's conception of the growth of religious insight, and the corresponding development of Christian doctrine within the Church. They constitute, at the same time, an illuminative commentary on his own treatment of the Gospel history. Woven, as in certain cases they seem to be, round some genuine saying of Jesus which has not otherwise reached us, the discourses, as developed by the Evangelist, are to be taken not as the actual words of Jesus on some specific occasion in his life-time, but as representing what would have been (in St. Paul's phrase) 'the mind of Christ' in regard to the problems facing the Church at the time when the Gospel was written. Historicity, therefore, in the modern sense, is not to be looked for in this Gospel. Yet the importance of the work for the subsequent history of Christianity lay precisely in its emphasis on the real humanity of its founder at a critical moment in the history of the new religion, when it seemed in danger of being cut loose from history altogether and resolved into a cosmological speculation. In spite of the freedom with which he treated the Synoptic narrative, the form in which the Evangelist cast his work was calculated in

[1] The word is Prof. Scott's, who emphasizes this aspect of the Gospel. Cf. *op. cit.*, pp. 166 *et seq.* So also Bacon, *Jesus and Paul*, p. 220.

itself to keep the mind of the Church centred upon the life and work of Jesus, 'the author and finisher of their faith'.

One aspect of this 'return to Jesus' (as we may call it) was the fresh insistence on the all-importance of a life befitting the Christian profession. We hear, from the recurring admonitions in his Epistles, that St. Paul's vindication of Christian freedom from the Jewish Law was used by some of his converts as 'an occasion to the flesh' (Gal. v. 13). So, now, the pre-eminence assigned to knowledge by the Gnostics, led to a neglect of ordinary moral duties and a depreciation of the typical Christian virtues. In the pride of their own enlightenment, such men begin to look down upon their ordinary Christian brethren, and to regard themselves as emancipated from the duties and restraints binding upon such. They are to be, in short, a law to themselves, and they acknowledge no consciousness of sin in any of their doings. In sharpest opposition to all such tendencies, the First Epistle denounces such 'lawlessness' (*ἀνομία*) as the very essence of sin (iii. 4), and repudiates the whole idea of a knowledge of God divorced from Christian practice, 'Hereby know we that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him' (ii. 3–4). 'If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen' (iv. 20). So also in the Gospel, 'If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments.' 'He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me' (xiv. 15–21). The proof of the possession of a true knowledge of God, and the condition of attaining it, is doing His will.

If one of the practical religious interests of the Fourth Gospel is thus to combat Docetic views of the Incarnation and the Gnostic tendency to resolve Christianity into a speculative knowledge of the divine economy apart from

the fruits of the Spirit in the conduct of life, a second object ever present to the writer's mind is the transformation of the apocalypticism so prominent in early Christianity into the spiritual doctrine of 'eternal life', not as dependent on, and subsequent to, any supernatural Parousia in the future, but as a life of divine fellowship into which the believer enters here and now. 'This is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send' (xvii. 3). 'He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgement, but hath passed out of death into life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour cometh, *and now is*, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live' (v. 24–5). Stimulated by the persecutions under Nero and Domitian, the belief in the imminence of the Second Coming and the establishment of the Kingdom of the Saints had received a new lease of life. Of this the best instance is the Apocalypse of St. John, written about A.D. 95, and connected, by its introductory letters to the Seven Churches, with the same region of Asia Minor as the Gospel. How long such beliefs survived, and how fanatically they were held by masses of Christians, we learn from the history of Montanism in the second and third centuries. As if foreseeing the dangers arising from this materialistic conception of the Return of Christ upon the clouds of heaven, an expectation destined to ever-repeated disappointment, the Fourth Evangelist expounds to us, in Chapters xiv–xvii, his doctrine of the true Return, the real Parousia, as the spiritual presence of the indwelling Christ. 'I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you' (xiv. 18–20). These chapters take the place, in this Gospel, of the apocalyptic chapters on the

signs of the End which immediately precede the Passion narrative in the Synoptics; and there can be no doubt that the parallelism is designed. To the early Christians the Parousia had meant the public vindication of their faith in the Messiahship of their crucified Lord, and the belief was too deeply rooted in the popular mind to be explicitly set aside. The Evangelist himself uses phraseology, from time to time, which implies the old conception. But, for himself, it has plainly ceased to be a vital element in his religious belief. In the most characteristic sections of the book the whole idea of a great assize on the 'last day', when Christ will return in state to judge the quick and the dead, gives place to the conception of a present and inward judgement, a sifting process continually going on, the judgement being passed in the truest sense upon each man by himself, according as he prefers darkness to light. 'God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through him.' 'He that believeth not hath been judged already . . . And this is the judgement, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil' (iii. 17–19.) Hence Jesus says, at one time, 'I judge no man'(viii. 15), and yet again, 'For judgement came I into this world' (ix. 39). 'Christ does not pass formal judgement upon men; it is enough that he has revealed Himself,—given them the opportunity of declaring their attitude towards Him. The fact of his appearance is the all-important issue which compels men to assert themselves in their true natures.' [1]

Hence the 'coming again' of Christ is not in this Gospel a visible appearance to the world at large, as in Revelation 'Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him' (i. 7), but an inward revelation to his followers. The Evangelist punctuates his meaning in the question of Judas: 'Judas

[1] E. F. Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 215.

saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him' (xiv. 22–3). Only to those who love him is such a manifestation possible, and this is the true Parousia.

The death of Christ appears in these concluding chapters chiefly as the necessary condition of this larger and abiding life within the Church. 'It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.' There is no real distinction, for the writer, between 'the Comforter'—'the holy Spirit whom the Father shall send in my name'—and the continued presence of Christ himself in the hearts of his followers. In one verse (xiv. 16), Christ speaks of 'another Comforter', but in the very next sentence the promise is, 'I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you.' The Evangelist's mystical doctrine of the indwelling Christ, with 'yet many things to say' to his followers, might well have become for the Christian Church the charter of a freedom not less wide than that suggested by Shakespeare:

> 'Prophetic soul
> Of the wide world, dreaming on things to come'

But the barren controversies of the centuries that followed are a sorry commentary on this larger outlook upon the future.

CHAPTER XVII

THE CHRIST OF THE CREEDS

In the four preceding chapters I have tried to give some account of the conceptions by which men of the first Christian century sought to explain, or to interpret to themselves, the fact of Jesus: the apocalyptic figure of a pre-existing Messiah; the Saviour-God of the Mysteries; and the idea of the Logos, the Second God, or Son of God, as the agent in creation. Obviously they are steps towards the doctrine of the Trinity as ultimately formulated by the Church some centuries later—towards what the Archbishop of York calls 'the fundamental Christian conviction that Jesus is God'.[1] It was doubtless inevitable in the circumstances of the time that the Gentile converts to the new faith should from the first regard their Master and Lord as in some sense a divine being. The apotheosis of a human being was familiar to them, not only in Greek mythology, but also in the elevation of the Emperors to divine rank upon their death; and equally familiar was the mythological idea of gods descending to earth in human form. Apart from this instinctive tendency, the first important step towards the later doctrine of 'the person of Jesus Christ' was taken by St. Paul, when he substituted for the primitive belief in the exaltation of the human Jesus the idea of the incarnation of a pre-existing divine Being. Suggested probably by the apocalyptic picture of the Messiah, 'hidden with God from the foundations of the world,' the figure of the national deliverer assumed for the apostle, in the light of the Cross, the gracious lineaments of a personal Saviour.

Paul seemingly remained unconscious of the difficulties surrounding the new departure; although, as we have seen, it insensibly gave a quasi-docetic colouring to his phraseology in speaking of the human life of 'the Man from

[1] *Christus Veritas*, p. 117.

Heaven'. This unconsciousness is explained by the fact that Paul's Christology and his whole religious outlook were rooted in his experience on the way to Damascus and the revulsion of feeling in which he recognized, in the Jesus whom he had persecuted, 'the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me' (Gal. ii. 20). Although he had never known Jesus in the flesh, and seems almost indifferent to the details of the life or the specific sayings of the Master, the spirit of the Life, summed up in the Death, had made an overwhelming impression upon him as the expression of self-sacrificing love. Hence the attitude of intense personal devotion, of adoring love and gratitude, which finds such rapturous expression in his Epistles: 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord'.[1] It is this, too, which inspires his vision of the future of the redeemed, conceived as it is by him in purely religious or mystical terms. It is 'to be with Christ', to 'be for ever with the Lord'—an eternity of bliss in personal communion with his Lord and Saviour, absorbed in rapturous contemplation of the inexhaustible marvel of divine grace —such a heaven as Dante describes in the closing cantos of the *Paradiso*. As he puts it in Eph. ii. 4–7; 'God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us

[1] Rom. viii. 35–9. It is surely not without significance that the immediate sequel of this passage is St. Paul's famous declaration, 'I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake, my kinsmen according to the flesh', an utterance so full of the spirit of Calvary.

together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.' Such a passage may surely be read as Paul's foretaste of the beatific vision.

For Paul himself, therefore 'the word of the Cross', as he calls it (1 Cor. i. 10), remained the centre of his preaching. Although, in his later Epistles, he proceeded to identify 'the Man from Heaven' with the Wisdom of God, represented in Hebrew literature as the agent of the divine purpose in creation, and declared that in this cosmic Christ there dwelt 'all the fulness of the godhead bodily', it was the actual death of the historic Jesus that moved him, as the supreme manifestation of divine redemptive love and the central event in the world's history. With others it was different: the more the divinity of the Christ was emphasized, the less important became the life-history of the human Jesus. The death itself ceased to have significance, for a god cannot die; and so Christ came to be conceived merely as the supernatural bearer to mankind of an esoteric knowledge of the Godhead and the phases of its manifestation. Even in writers reputed orthodox in their own generation, we find docetism, or something very like it, as when Clement of Alexandria tells us that Christ's body was superior to physical needs. 'He ate, not for the sake of his bodily frame, which was held together by a holy energy, but lest his companions should think of him otherwise. He knew no pain, or grief, or emotion, and had no need to learn.' In reaction against such widespread Docetic and Gnostic tendencies, it has been remarked that the special object of the earliest formularies of orthodox Christian belief is to safeguard the real humanity of the Redeemer. His celestial origin—his divinity, in some sense of that ambiguous term—is taken for granted. Thus, in the so-called Apostles' Creed,

in the phrase 'born of the Virgin Mary', as Professor H. R. Mackintosh points out, 'it is the reality of our Lord's birth, even more than its unique character, upon which emphasis is laid', while 'the curiously definite statement that the crucifixion occured under Pontius Pilate . . . proves that the primary interest of the authors of the Creed was in facts.'[1]

But it was not enough to reaffirm the historical facts to which the new religion traced its origin. The fundamental difficulty raised by the Pauline Christology remained—namely, how to conceive the relation (union shall we call it?) between the eternal Christ and the human individual, Jesus of Nazareth. The relation can hardly be one of sheer identity, unless we are prepared to accept a purely docetic conclusion as regards the human body. If we accept the physical reality of the body, we can hardly suppose that the Christ descended from heaven in bodily form; we must think of the union as having taken place at a given point in the earthly life of Jesus—at his conception, his birth, or (as in fact was frequently held by those who first began to reflect on the subject) at his baptism. Similarly, the union was commonly regarded by these thinkers as having been dissolved upon the Cross, before death closed the scene. So Tertullian interprets the parting cry of desolation; and, in the same spirit, Origen, replying to the taunt of Celsus about a crucified god, declares that 'the Word, remaining essentially the Word, suffers none of those things which are endured by the body or soul'.[2] At first the tendency was to think rather loosely of the body alone as constituting the human element in the combination, and of the Logos or the Christ as taking the place in Jesus of the human soul, as that exists self-consciously in ordinary individuals. But it is not really possible to treat the body or the 'flesh' in this fashion as a mechanical framework, in abstraction

1 *The Person of Jesus Christ*, p. 139.
2 *c. Celsum*, iv. 15. Quoted by Mackintosh, p. 168.

from the inner life of sensation and emotion which it mediates: to deny Jesus Christ a human soul amounts, in fact, to a complete denial of his true humanity. Others, therefore, like Apollinaris on the basis of a threefold analysis, into body, soul, and spirit, taught that the body and soul in Christ were human, but that the place of the human spirit was taken in his case by the Logos. But as the spirit is held to include the higher psychical functions —the distinctively human powers of intelligence and moral choice—matters can hardly be said to be improved. The more usual course of the disputants is to maintain the human personality of Jesus, without any clear account of its union with the divine Logos.

As regards the cosmological status of the Logos itself—the metaphysical relation, that is to say, between the Logos, or the Son, and the supreme God (the Father Almighty)—a wide latitude of opinion is observable during the first three Christian centuries. Subordination in one respect or another may almost be said to be the rule. The being of a son seems naturally derivative from that of a father, and we find Tertullian stoutly maintaining that there was a time when the Son did not exist (*fuit tempus cum filius non fuit*). Origen, though he taught the eternal generation of the Son, did not hesitate to speak of him as a creature (κτίσμα), 'the most ancient of the works of God'. Philo's description of the Logos as 'the second God' suggests the same derivative and subordinate relation. On the other hand, in popular Christian thought and feeling, as expressed in worship, Christ had almost taken the place of God. Pliny, in his letter to Trajan (A.D. 111), describes the Christians as singing hymns to Christ as to God. In the beginning of the fourth century an acute crisis was provoked by Arius, who definitely taught that the Son, or the Logos, is not co-eternal with the Father, but a creaturely being, created by the Father out of nothing, to be the mediator of further creation. Arius

propounded his theory apparently in the interest of monotheism; but the Arian Christ, a demigod called into existence to create the world, is a purely mythological figure, neither god nor man, but standing midway between the two. As against Arianism, the Church at the Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325) declared its belief in the deity of Jesus Christ in the fullest sense: 'God of God, Light of Light, Very God of very God, Begotten not made, Being of one substance with the Father.' And the position of Athanasius, though on the face of it more incredible than the heresy it combated, lent itself in the sequel more readily to philosophical interpretation.

The defeat of Arianism was, however, far from solving the difficulties involved in the conception of the God-man. On the contrary, the Athanasian doctrine intensified and brought to the front the problem of the 'two natures' in one 'person' which Christian theologians discussed so ineffectually for another century and more. As against Monophysite theories current at the time, the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451) declared the orthodox doctrine of the Church to be that Jesus Christ is *both* God *and* Man. But, as Professor Mackintosh expresses it, 'the Council did not so much reconcile or synthesize the opposing theories put before it, as conceal their opposition under extremely careful phrases'.[1] The debate was, in point of fact, resumed over the verbally different formula of 'two wills', and proceeded intermittently till the Council of Constantinople (A.D. 680) condemned the Monothelite heresy also, and affirmed that in Jesus Christ there are two wills, the divine and the human. The most that can be said for these authoritative decisions is that they represented a refusal on the part of the Church to surrender the real humanity of Jesus, which was constantly in danger of being overlaid by the divinity also attributed to him. For the rest, 'the history of the whole controversy', as

[1] *The Person of Jesus Christ*, p. 215.

Dr. Temple has said, 'represents the bankruptcy of Greek patristic theology; it marks the definite failure of all attempts to explain the Incarnation in terms of Essence, Substance, Nature, and the like'.[1] 'The breakdown', he wrote in an earlier essay, 'was inevitable, because the spirit cannot be expressed in terms of substance at all. The whole of Greek theology, noble as it is, suffers from a latent materialism; the doctrine of substance is in essence materialistic.'[2] This is, I believe, so profoundly true that its admission must completely transform the traditional statements of Christian theology. 'The truth is', as Harnack bluntly puts it, 'that we cannot think in realistic fashion of the *deus homo factus* without thinking ourselves out of it.'[3] By thinking in a realistic fashion, he means thinking of it in terms of substance, and of two natures, divine and human, miraculously united and incomprehensibly present together combined in one person. The doctrine of 'two natures', as we have just seen, is fundamental in the traditional theology; and the formula of Chalcedon, as the archbishop says, 'is content to reaffirm the fact'. This, he adds, 'is exactly what an authoritative formula ought to do'. But surely it is a futile procedure simply to reaffirm a fact, when the question is in what sense the fact is to be understood, what intelligible meaning it holds for us. 'Interpretations will vary from age to age', says Dr. Temple, 'according to the concepts supplied to the interpreter by current thought.'[4] But what is a fact, we may reply, apart from *some* interpretation of its meaning? If the traditional statement is 'in essence materialistic', some reinterpretation of the dogma is an urgent necessity.

Reinterpretation must obviously proceed on ethical and spiritual lines; and the dogma of 'the two natures', rooted as it is in the assumptions of an obsolete metaphysic,

[1] *Christus Veritas*, p. 134.
[2] In an essay on 'The Divinity of Christ' in *Foundations*, p. 231.
[3] *History of Dogma*, ii. 285.
[4] *Christus Veritas*, p. 134.

gets short shrift from recent theologians. The real humanity of Jesus, in the fullest sense of the term, is in fact their assumption and starting-point, and it is just in the perfection of his human nature that he becomes for them a revelation of the nature of God. 'The Christian announcement', says Professor John Baillie in his latest book, 'is quite centrally and essentially that God was made manifest to us in a *Man*—in a soul of like passions with our own but controlled to finer ends, in a life of simple faith and quiet helpfulness lived out under human conditions in its own little niche of time and place, and in a cruel death bravely borne.'[1] Or, as it is more elaborately stated by Professor H. R. Mackintosh: 'His life on earth was unequivocally human. Jesus was a man, a Jew of the first century, with a life localized in and restricted by a body organic to His self-consciousness; of limited power, which could be, and was, thwarted by persistent unbelief; of limited knowledge, which, being gradually built up by experience, made Him liable to surprise and disappointment; of a moral nature susceptible of growth, and exposed to lifelong temptation; of a piety and personal religion characterized at each point by dependence upon God. In short, He moved always within the limits of an experience humanly normal in constitution, even if abnormal in its sinless quality. The life Divine in Him found expression through human faculty, with a self-consciousness and activity mediated by His human *milieu*. We cannot predicate of Him two consciousnesses or two wills: the New Testament indicates nothing of the kind, nor indeed is it congruous with an intelligible psychology. The unity of His personal life is axiomatic.'[2]

For Professor Mackintosh such a statement is rendered possible by the theory of Kenosis, which theologians have based on the passage in Philippians where Paul,

[1] *The Place of Jesus Christ in Modern Christianity*, p. 136.
[2] *The Person of Jesus Christ*, pp. 469–70.

speaking of the Incarnation, says that Christ Jesus 'being in the form of God, *emptied himself*, and took upon him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men'. Kenotic theories bring themselves into line with historic fact by taking these words in their literal and most comprehensive sense—as implying, in Professor Mackintosh's words, 'a real surrender of the glory and prerogatives of Deity', 'an act of divine self-limitation', 'a great supra-temporal act by which the Son chose to pass into human life', a human life accepted once for all with all its implications. But, as we find him subsequently[1] discussing the question, to what extent, in the course of his earthly life and through the experiences of that life, 'Jesus became aware of his divinity', of 'his own essential sonship', 'his unshared unity with the Father', it would seem that there still remains for him a certain duality in the consciousness of the historic Jesus. The idea of the God-man has not been entirely surrendered.

This is still more marked in the case of Dr. Temple, who acknowledges that he finds in the Kenotic theory 'difficulties' which are 'intolerable'. 'To say that God the Eternal Son at a moment of time divested Himself of Omniscience and Omnipotence in order to live a human life, reassuming these attributes at the Ascension, seems to me just the kind of thing that no event occurring on this planet could ever justify.'[2] 'What was happening to the rest of the universe', he asks, 'during the period of our Lord's earthly life? To say that the Infant Jesus was from His cradle exercising providential care over it all is certainly monstrous; but to deny this, and yet to say that the Creative Word was so self-emptied as to have no being except in the Infant Jesus, is to assert that for a certain period the history of the world was let loose from the control of the Creative Word, and "apart from Him" very nearly everything happened that happened at all during thirty odd years, both on this planet and

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 480–2. [2] *Christus Veritas*, p. 141.

throughout the immensities of space.' 'The Incarnation', he says elsewhere, 'was a reality and not a sham. He who lived among men and died on the Cross was the Second Person of the Eternal Trinity.'[1] And the difficulty apparently is that, according to the Kenotic theory, the Second Person must have left his place in heaven vacant for thirty years and his cosmic functions unattended to. The Archbishop's own view is that the Kenosis did not go so far. 'Jesus did not control affairs in Mars or China. But God the Son, who is the Word of God by whom, as agent, all things came to be and apart from whom no single thing has come to be, without ceasing His creative and sustaining work, added this to it that He became flesh and dwelt as in a tabernacle among us. . . . He who is always God became also man—not ceasing to be God the while.'

But, if so, it would seem to follow that God the Son was present in Jesus only with part of his being, and that we cannot, therefore, with any strictness of language, speak of the Second Person of the Trinity as living for thirty years in Palestine or dying upon the Cross. Surely the very mention of such difficulties and such solutions is a sufficient *reductio ad impossibile* of the dogma which gives rise to them, the deity, namely, of Jesus in a metaphysical (or shall we not rather say in a physical?) sense. For the whole discussion is dominated here once more by the old materialistic conception of substance. Are we really to suppose that God, in his infinite being, was in any sense locally and existentially present in the human frame of Jesus of Nazareth? Dr. Temple says at one point in his book that 'if standing before them in the flesh, Jesus had said to those devout Jews "I am God", he would have reduced them to mere bewilderment'. He fails to realize that his own language in pressing the same claim often produces in his readers a similar sense of stupefaction.

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 121.

To clear our minds, we have but to reflect on the process by which such a conception as that of 'God the Son', or 'the Second Person of the Eternal Trinity', was arrived at. In reviewing the Zoroastrian theology, I alluded in passing to the inveterate tendency of the human mind to substantiate or personify abstractions, and (one may add) to treat the bold images of the poet as a bare statement of literal fact. Zoroastrian theology offered us many examples of the process by which the attributes of Ahuramazda were transformed into personal beings, the Amesha Spentas (Immortal Beneficent Ones) who surround him as his attendants and the ministers of his will. Chief among these are Vohu Mano (Good Mind) and Asha (Right), both patent personifications. Vohu Mano is represented as the first of Ahuramazda's creations, with whom or through whom he produced all his other creatures. And in process of time Strabo, journeying in Cappadocia, found there a temple to Omanos and Zoroastrian priests carrying the image of the god in procession.[1]

The Hebrew parallel, in what is said of Wisdom in *Proverbs* and in the *Wisdom of Solomon*, hardly needs to be pointed out. The wisdom exhibited by the divine Creator in his work is there again represented—but this time more obviously in a flight of poetic imagery—as his first creation and as standing beside him as master-builder, 'before his works of old or ever the earth was'. Taken literally, this yields the Wisdom theology, on the basis of which St. Paul worked out his conception of the cosmic Christ; and the Wisdom theology of the Hebrews has in turn a close parallel in the Logos theology, as worked out in Alexandria under Greek inspiration, and ultimately employed in the statement of Christian dogma.

Logos—whether in the sense of reason or of language as the expression of rational meaning—has in Greek no personal associations whatever. The personification of the

[1] See above, p. 142.

term is entirely due to Philo, for whom, as a philosopher, it represents the Platonic Ideas, the articulated rational structure of the universe, embedded, so to speak, in the world of sense, and spoken of at times by Plato himself as the pattern according to which the latter was constructed. Plato had apparently no difficulty in conceiving this system of Ideas as self-existent; but for Philo, who, as a pious Jew, believed also in the God of Israel, it was natural to conceive them as in some sense the thoughts of God, according to which he constructed the material world. On the other hand, however, under the influence of Greek philosophy, Philo's God had become so utterly transcendent that his nature is inexpressible by any of our categories, and it is especially unthinkable that he should come into any kind of direct contact with matter and be thereby defiled. Here, then, arose the conception of a 'second God', or 'Son of God', as the agent in creation—the divine intelligence, in short, no longer regarded as an attribute of God, or as God himself in action, but substantiated as if it were, in some sense at least, a distinct being. This was the metaphysical framework which Christian theologians found ready to their hand, and into which they proceeded to fit the figure of their Lord. But for Philo's 'second God', we should hardly have had the 'Second Person of the Eternal Trinity,' or any attempt to equate Jesus with God. But for this insidious tendency to personify the abstract, we should have remained content with the idea of one creative Spirit, at once transcendent and immanent —moving in the hearts of men, itself the inspirer of every advance—and have been satisfied to recognize in Jesus of Nazareth, in his life and death as well as in his teaching, the supreme example of such inspiration.

Dr. Temple had indeed himself pointed out the more excellent way of approaching this question. In his essay in *Foundations*, in 1912, he wrote, 'The central doctrine of Christianity has been made unduly difficult by the way

in which believers inevitably tend to state it. It is really a doctrine about God. . . . The wise question is not "Is Christ Divine?" but "What is God like?".'[1] In almost identical terms, Dean Inge wrote more recently, in the essay which he entitles 'Confessio Fidei': 'The controversy about the divinity of Christ has been habitually conducted on wrong lines. We assume that we know what the attributes of God are, and we collect them from any sources rather than from the revelation of God in Christ. We maintain that, in spite of His voluntary humiliation, Christ possessed all the attributes of the Sultan of the universe before whom other creeds are willing to do homage. But surely Christ came to earth to reveal to us not that He was like God, but that God was like Himself.'[2] In every religion the question at issue is the character of its God or gods; for on that depends its whole conception of human duty and its views of human destiny. The lesson of Christianity is that we have to think of God in terms of Christ—*sub specie Christi*, if we may adapt a great phrase—in terms, that is to say, of his recorded teaching and of the spirit of his dedicated life and death. And in order to give us authentic tidings of the character of God, Jesus did not require actually to *be* God. As the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews puts it: 'God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son'. Jesus completes the message of the prophets. The religion of Jesus is—is, we may say, obviously—the religion of the greater prophets, only more intimately realized, and consistently lived out in the story of his human life and death. In both cases, the message authenticates itself, not because it comes to us through some miraculous channel, but by its own content —as Spinoza says, 'by the wisdom of its doctrine'.[3] It 'finds'

[1] *Foundations*, pp. 213, 259. [2] *Outspoken Essays*, Second Series, p. 49.
[3] 'Sola doctrinae sapientia': in one of his letters to Oldenberg, No. 73, in Van Vloten's revised numeration.

us by its appeal to all that is best in us. 'We needs must love the highest when we see it!' And because its origin was not 'miraculous', in the specific traditional sense of that word, it was none the less the work of God in a human soul. In that sense we may still say with St. Paul, 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself'. Indeed, no statement of the fact could be more appropriate.

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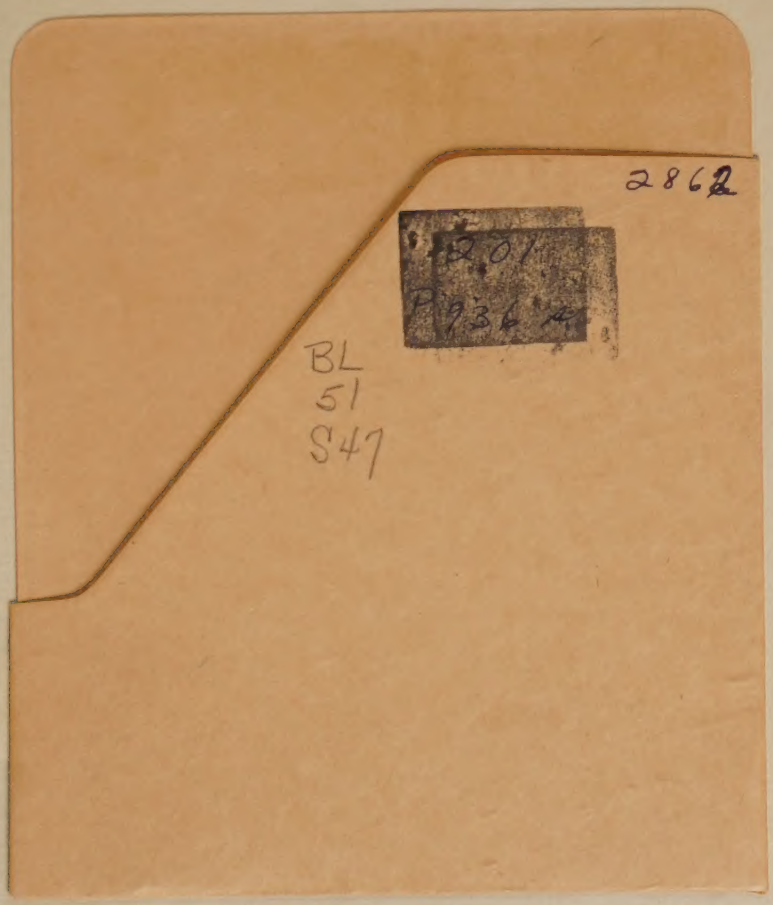
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